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Beautiful Day. Pleasant Walk: Walking and Landscape in the Works of Eswick Evans, John D. Godman, Elizabeth Fries Ellet, and Bradford Torrey

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BEAUTIFUL DAY. PLEASANT WALK: WALKING AND LANDSCAPE IN THE
WORKS OF ESWICK EVANS, JOHN D. GODMAN, ELIZABETH FRIES ELLET, AND
BRADFORD TORREY

by

SCOTT R. HONEYCUTT

Under the Direction of Robert Sattelmeyer

ABSTRACT

Throughout the nineteenth century, walking for leisure and for spiritual endeavor in America correlated with the rise of literary romanticism. This burgeoning fashion of pedestrian travel, coupled with an impulse to experience the ever expanding nation, spawned a new and enduring subgenre in American letters – the walking text. Many scholars consider Henry David Thoreau and John Muir to be the century’s greatest literary amblers and naturalists; while their catalogs of walking literature are

foundational, they are not exclusive. "Beautiful Day. Pleasant Walk: Walking and Landscape in Works of Estwick Evans, John D. Godman, Elizabeth Fries Ellet, and Bradford Torrey" aims to establish the importance of several underappreciated nineteenth century American pedestrians and landscapes. In addition to analyzing the development and importance of walking texts throughout the century, this dissertation also considers the geographies over which the authors traveled. The northern grounds of Ohio's forgotten Great Black Swamp (Evans) and Philadelphia's bucolic Wissahickon Creek (Godman), team with the southern worlds of rural Antebellum landscapes (Ellet) and Civil War battlefields (Torrey) to create a compelling map of nineteenth century America. Finally, through first-hand, authorial accounts this study discusses each terrain's historical contexts as well as their current conditions.

INDEX WORDS: Walking, Pedestrianism, Nature writing, American landscapes, Estwick Evans, John D. Godman, Elizabeth Fries Ellet, Bradford Torrey, Henry David Thoreau, Nineteenth century travel writing

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DEDICATION

To Nora and Rose, the most companionable of companions

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1 INTRODUCTION

Several years ago I undertook a walking tour of Vermont. I began my trip at Vermont's northern border with Quebec, and my goal was to hike the length of the State on its famed Long Trail. I was young; it was summer. One evening as I neared the rocky terrain of Smuggler's Notch, I heard footfalls fast approaching. Soon a figure came into view. He was walking hard down the trail toward me, and his head was bent low as he intently inspected a flower held in his right hand. As he drew closer and called out "hello," I slowed my pace. What followed was one of the most curious encounters of my life.

The figure before me looked like Conrad's harlequin Russian. The young man wore a hound's-tooth three piece suit, which was cropped into shorts at the knee, and instead of hiking boots he donned leather boat shoes that had been cut and modified into something akin to roman legionary sandals. He smiled and introduced himself as Daniel.

As we walked, Daniel confided that he had started hiking months ago in Michigan, and his goal was to reach Maine by September where he was to enroll as a botany student at Bowdoin College. He claimed that he traveled cross country and simply "took a left" when he stumbled upon the Long Trail; he hoped to find interesting flora to examine. What impressed me most about Daniel was not that he was

a long distance walker. I, too, could lay claim to that title. I was most intrigued by his pedestrian way of seeing, of living, of participating in the natural world. I had always walked on trails, following the path laid out before me. Ensnared between two trailheads, there were defined beginnings and endings to my walks. Daniel, though, was a different sort of traveler. He let the landscape dictate his heels. He followed the folds of the land like one who was neither constrained by time nor possessions, but instead he seemed fueled by an obscure mysticism that drove him to take the long, slow way.

At camp Daniel shared with me his walker's journals – he carried four of them. These pages were filled with the minutiae of his observations. Just as Daniel walked through the American landscape, the wilds of America walked through his words. From the state flower of Ohio, the scarlet carnation, to a black bear he witnessed along the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania, Daniel's notebooks cataloged and commented on an America seen at three miles an hour.

I spent the afternoon reading his words and listening to him explain the intricacies of white pine seed pollination. Daniel's descriptions of the forests and his close perceptions seemed to be based solely on his mode of travel – walking. Obviously he could have, like most, taken a car or plane to Bowdoin, but through walking, through physically contacting with the earth and moving through its varied terrains,

Daniel's travel to Maine transformed from mere tour into a pilgrimage. By slowing down his travel, he was speeding up his skills of viewing and corresponding with nature. Years later I came to view Daniel as an heir to the tradition of Henry David Thoreau's walker or saunterer, as he answered Thoreau's call for walkers to "naturally go to the fields and woods" ("Walking" 98).

Thoreau, America's foremost literary walker, solidified his love of a jaunt in the essay "Walking." "Walking" is perhaps the most famous treatise that extols pedestrianism, even if the text seemingly verges away from the physical act of peripatetic travel midway through the work in favor of a more abstract praise of the wild. The text, culled from two late lectures, "Walking" and "The Wild," urges its readers to enter into and through nature propelled only by their legs. Each experience afoot in the outdoors should suggest a journey to higher truth or more authentic living.

Thoreau's practice of taking daily walks is well known, and his texts that expose his love of pedestrianism remain seminal and much studied. In spite of Thoreau's fame as a walker, his works, however crucial, are not singular in their praise of and meditation on walking. In the nineteenth century, the fusion of walking and writing permeated American literature. Most, notably and obviously, early accounts of wild America are filled with encounters of rugged treks undertaken by travel on horseback and by boat in addition to walking. Another walker, Susan Fenimore Cooper, begins the

“Summer” section of *Rural Hours* with the terse and exacting lines, “Beautiful day. Pleasant walk” (59). This brevity of language provides two precise images: the out-of-doors and the most human of all travel methods. Invariably, many American writers accepted both Thoreau and Cooper’s invitations to walk out into the American landscape and to describe and reflect upon their communities as well as the country at large.

The literature of walking and observing nature while afoot is a varied yet little studied sub-genre in American letters, and the personalities who wrote about walking and their motivations for taking to foot are more diverse than perhaps suspected.

“Beautiful Day. Pleasant Walk: Walking and Landscape in the Works of Estwick Evans, John. D. Godman, Elizabeth Fries Ellet, and Bradford Torrey” considers how these walkers responded to the natural world as they helped to construct a literary genre that was antithetical to the wider paradigms of American technological expansion while simultaneously embracing the democratizing spirit of travel and construction of place.

The opening page of Mark Twain’s *A Tramp Abroad* sets a satirical tone with the following lines: “After a brief rest at Hamburg, we made preparations for a long pedestrian trip southward in the soft spring weather, but at the last moment we changed the program, for *private reasons*, and took the express-train” (my italics, 17). I am interested in those writers who for private reasons, often made public, reverse

Twain's satirical dig and chose to walk when the easier and most expedient method of travel would have been to ride, whether on rail or by coach. Additionally, I am intrigued not by writers who happened to include walking in their works because it was the most accessible form of travel, or those wrote of their walks by default when the waters were too rough for navigation or their horses too weary. Instead of mere travel narrators, I wish to focus on authors who resolved to walk and who, like Thoreau, found in it a purpose and way of experiencing America intimately, without need of any more mobility than their own feet.

In the past twenty years, a number of scholarly texts have studied the relationship between walking and literature. For example, Jeffery Robinson's *The Walk* (1989), Anne D. Wallace's *Walking, Literature, and English Culture* (1993), Robin Jarvis' *Romantic Writing and Pedestrian Travel* (1997), and Donna Landry's *The Invention of the Countryside* (2004), all expose connections between writers and nature, their practices of pedestrian composition, and the greater societal implications of walking. Even though the latter works are well researched and delivered, they are limiting to one interested in American pedestrians because these texts exclusively focus on European practices of walking, and their theses orbit primarily around William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's rambles throughout England's Lake District and Scotland. Although these pedestrian-focused works provide precedent for scholarly investigation into the

history of and development of walking literature, they simply do not address the great arena of American literary walkers.

In an attempt to bridge the field between European walkers and their American counterparts, two texts, David C. Smith's *The Transcendental Saunter: Thoreau and the Search for Self* (1997) and Michaela Keck's *Walking in the Wilderness: the Peripatetic Tradition in Nineteenth Century American Literature and Painting* (2006), explore how American writers, especially Thoreau, follow and ultimately expand upon the tradition of European walking through romantic landscapes. Smith, in particular, focuses on Thoreau's excursions throughout New England and how Thoreau creates a sense of self-actualization through his journeys on foot. Keck's work endeavors to move beyond Thoreau's vaunted saunters as she studies how Hudson River School painters, such as Thomas Cole, also appropriated the walking traditions of Europe and infused them with America's sublime and seemingly untrammelled terrain. Smith and Keck open the conversation of American walking and literature, but just as the British walking studies limit their arguments, Smith and Keck write on the well-worn paths of Thoreau and Cole. Thus, many of America's writer/walkers are simply ignored in favor of more popular authors.

Three other recent works that offer thorough accounts of the history of walking: Rebecca Solnit's *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, (2001) Joseph Amato's *On Foot: A*

History of Walking (2004), and Geoff Nicholson's *Walking: A Lost Art* (2008) provide contexts to walking and move beyond literary texts to examine the psychology of pilgrimages, human migrations, gender issues, urban promenades and even the recent phenomenon of mall-walkers. They provide a collective scope and historical sequencing of walking and walkers; however, the works are sparse in their literary analysis, especially in regards to American literature. Finally, in 2006, Amy Hamilton of the University of New Mexico wrote a dissertation entitled "Peregrinations: Walking the Story, Writing the Path in Euro-American, Native American, and Chicano/Chicana Literatures" which sought to bring literary walkers into prominence. Though important, Hamilton's study is not exhaustive as she focuses attentively on walking in the texts of Puritan captivity narratives, Native American pilgrimages, and John Muir's catalog.

To differentiate my dissertation from previous studies of walking literature, my work centers on American writers and walkers, most whom have been paid scant attention by the literary world: Evans, Godman, Ellet, and Torrey; regards the varied reasons of why and where writers walked; and explores the same ground over which the walkers' trod as it reflects on the human and natural history of the place as well as the land's contemporary state.

A dissertation that seeks to understand where and why nineteenth century authors walked and how this walking reflects in their writings about the natural world poses obvious hazard. Admittedly, the subject of walking verges on the esoteric. It seems too obvious, or, to use the pejorative, too pedestrian.

The most gainful approach to a study on walking and nature in the nineteenth century arises from ecocriticism. Ecocriticism places the nonhuman, natural (a conflicted term) world at the center of discourse and exposes the manner in which writers reflect on and ultimately deal with the world beyond the humans. The introduction to *The Ecocritical Reader* defines ecocriticism with the broadest of terms: “Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment [...] ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies” (Glotfelty xviii).

In an effort to move beyond the expected analysis of canonical writers’ thoughts on “literature and the physical environment,” my project will be infused by those walkers whose attitudes toward words and earth are less well known. Michael P. Branch argues in “Before Nature Writing” that numerous texts have contributed to our understanding of America; however, many of these works remain neglected, and “it is time for scholars to examine environmental writing in different genres, from earlier periods, and organized according to various ideological assumptions” (92). As a result,

the peripatetic visions of female walkers and forgotten naturalists should be considered with the likes of Thoreau and Muir. Even Lawrence Buell, a scholar paramount to ecocritical readings, suggests in *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and American Culture* that walking literature should be studied: “Indeed a whole volume could be written on the excursion as a form of environmental interaction – or even as a single subgenre, as Jeffery Robinson and Rodger Gilbert have shown in their [European] studies of the literary walk” (220).

Though most of the walkers in my study lumber along in near anonymity, my dissertation's goal is not necessarily to promote these lesser known works to the canonical status of Thoreau. Instead, I hope to give the lie to Thoreau's essay “Walking” which claimed there to be “but one or two persons [...]who understood the art of Walking, that is, of taking walks” (2). In addition, I hope to provide insight into how other lesser known walkers imagined American scenery and contributed to the unfolding ideas of American nature and culture.

Further, my study on walkers adds a third element to Glotfelty's dual literature and physical environment paradigm – the walker himself or herself. This third, human element complicates a strict earth-based reading of texts. By reviewing the societal and literary forces at play in America during the nineteenth century, the walkers can be placed into proper cultural contexts. Writing in the Introduction of *Beyond Nature*

Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism (2001), Karla Armbruster and Kathleen R. Wallace call for an increased range of ecocritical study, one which would surely include walking literature: “[W]e believe an expanded sense of environment and of the potential topics for ecocritical analysis will help ecocriticism grapple with one of its central conceptual challenges – understanding nature and culture as interwoven rather than separate sides of a dualistic construct” (Armbruster and Wallace 4). In hopes of achieving this interwoven harmony between the walker and the society through which he and she walked, my project is also informed by such works as Raymond William’s *The Country and the City* (1975) and Simon Schama’s *Landscape and Memory* (1996).

In addition to more traditional critical approaches, I am also interested in what Don Scheese labels as “field work.” Scheese sets precedent for this methodology when he writes, “for centuries we have employed the metaphor of ‘the book of nature/ - nature as text. Why not the text as nature?’” (10). By including accounts of my own walks and responses to the environment, I perform two tasks: first, I gain understanding of terrain that inspired the walkers, and second, I aspire to make my project more accessible. One of the most grievous crimes that I find committed in earth-centered studies is when the author seems to have little firsthand experience with his or her subject – the nonhuman world. By actually walking in the walkers’ paths, I hope to avoid this pitfall.

1.1 The Lost Walkers and Why: Omissions

I want to address any glaring omissions that may be evident in this work. It may seem curious that I have neglected to provide chapter length studies centered on the three canonical American walkers: Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, and Susan Fenimore Cooper. After all, Thoreau's *Walden* and essays, along with Muir's *1000 Mile Walk to the Gulf* and Cooper's *Rural Hours* provide some of the most obvious, if not the best, convergences of landscape and pedestrianism produced in America. Yet it is the very popularity of these writers that keeps them secondary in my study. Critics have rightly observed Thoreau's compulsory walking. The aforementioned *Transcendental Saunterer* (1997) by Smith and Keck's *Walking in the Wilderness* (2006) both enlarge our understanding of Thoreau's walking as a means of mediation and utilitarian practice; recall that wood and lot surveying was his primary civil vocation. Also, John Muir's catalog has received increased eco-critical attention in past ten years, and Ken Burns' recent PBS documentary *The National Parks: America's Best Idea* (2009), which centered on Muir's legacy, enjoyed a wide audience. In the film, Muir receives exhaustive praise for his wilderness ethic in addition to his skills in mountaineering and hiking. And even Cooper, who was originally outshined by both her father's *Leatherstocking Tales* and Thoreau's literary reputation, is now viewed as an essential and needed feminine voice. Needless to say, all three produce long-shadowed texts that are not easily side-stepped.

My scope, though, is more humble. Instead of showcasing the big three, I desire to illustrate that far from being literary anomalies, Thoreau, Muir, and Cooper were part of a broader group of writers who walked the continent and were moved to words through physical movement and tangible nature. While my study's lesser known writers may have limitations, they also contributed to the greater conversation of what it meant to live and experience nineteenth century America. Certainly, Thoreau, Muir, and Cooper play a crucial role in this project, yet their paramount reputations are more taken for granted and utilized than surveyed and promoted.

In addition to my focus on historically second-tier writers, though first rate walkers, I have also chosen to avoid wading into the subject of American Slave Narratives. Slave Narratives provide some of the most lurid details surrounding the physical strain of walking. In text after text, these first person accounts capture the painful reality of pedestrian travel, the loneliness of the journey and the fear of discovery. For example, in the early pages of Frederick Douglass' 1845 *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, he describes his mother's grueling 12 mile walk to visit him in the evenings: "she made her journeys at night, travelling the whole distance on foot, after the performance of her day's work" (2). Needless to say Douglass' mother was not out for stars nor romantic transcendence. Later in his *Narrative*, Douglass subverts the

notion of romantics who pleasure-walked, as he describes the grounds of his master's plantation:

Colonel Lloyd kept a large plantation and finely cultivated garden, which afforded almost constant employment for four men [...]. This garden was probably the greatest attraction to the place. During the summer months, *people came from far and near* – from Baltimore, Easton and Annapolis – *to see it*. It abounded in fruits of almost every description, from the hardy apple of the north to the delicate orange of the south. This garden was not the least source of trouble on the plantation. (my italics, 9)

For Douglass, and millions of those like him, taking leisurely strolls through the garden was simply not an option, and if some had the great fortune *to see it*, those who actually worked the land had the greater misfortune of *seeing others in it*, while they were kept from their labor by the lash.

Douglass' critique of romanticism provides an compelling contrast to the common artistic wisdom of the 1840's, as his class of people may have been more piqued by the nourishing food that grew in the garden than the picturesque quality of the place. Douglass' text and other slave narratives complicate early walking literature, and though their contributions to what it meant to travel across the nineteenth century

American land are invaluable, their plights and journeys are beyond the range of this study.

Finally, one may observe that the walkers in this project are decidedly Eastern in their habits and haunts. Considering that America's destiny was in the Western horizons, this last omission may seem increasingly suspect. It was Thoreau, of course, who noted in "Walking," "Eastward I go force, but westward I go free" (15). Much like the contributions of African-American slave narratives, the Western walkers are crucial to an all-encompassed history of the genre, yet the vastness of the catalog demands independent attention. For example, Charles F. Lummis' text *A Tramp across the Continent* (1892) is one of the first and finest works that follows a holiday-walker, not an anglo-explorer or pioneer-family, from his home in Ohio to California in 1884. Lummis, a young newspaper man, who would go on to a career as a California journalist, librarian, and Native American rights activist, was tapping into the country's appetite for adventure tales. His work, like Washington Irving's travelogue *A Tour on the Prairies* (1834) and Frederick Law Olmstead's *A Journey through Texas* (1857) represents a shift away from a civilized, Eastern literary milieu toward the excitement of the "untamed West;" it was an idea that played a central part in America's mythology. Unlike Irving and Olmstead, however, Lummis would never again live in the East. The opening lines

of *Tramp* address his reasons for traveling and offer a glimpse into his insouciant character:

But why tramp? Are there not railroads and Pullmans enough that you must walk? That is what a great many of my friends said when they learned of my determination to travel from Ohio to California on foot; and very likely it is the question that will first come to your mind in reading of the longest walk for pure pleasure that is on record [...]. I was after neither time nor money, but life – not life in the pathetic meaning of the poor health-seeker, for I was perfectly well and a trained athletic; but life in the truer, broader, sweeter sense, the exhilarant joy of living outside the sorry fences of society, living where brain and brawn and leg and lung all rejoice and grow alert together. I am an American and felt ashamed to know so little of my own country as I did, and most Americans do [...]. Furthermore, I wished to remove from Ohio to California. So here was a chance to kill several birds with one stone; to learn more of the country and its people than railroad travel could ever teach; to have the physical joy which only the confirmed pedestrian knows; to have the mental awakening of new sights and experiences; and to get, in this enjoyable fashion, to my new home. These were the motives which led me to undertake a walk of 3507 miles, occupying 143 days [...] It was purely

“for fun” in a good sense; and the most productive four months of a rather stirring life. (1-2)

Lummis’ words capture the bravado and individualism that abound in the spirit of walkers from the American West. The harshness of the landscape working with frontier attitudes toward society’s limits gave rise to new class of iconoclastic pedestrian.

Lummis’ late-century text would help to usher in a genre that would bear fruit in the twentieth century, just as the New England walking and natural history essays were losing traction. Though the twentieth century would see a renaissance in Western pedestrian literature – consider Van Dykes’ *The Great American Desert* (1901), Colin Fletcher’s works *The Man Who Walked through Time* (1968) and Edward Abbey’s *Desert Solitaire* (1968) – the full story of walking in our Western lands has yet to be told.

Perhaps a future project will go further to illuminate the voluminous amount of literature that features pedestrian feats beyond the Mississippi; my paper, however, will have to leave the narrative curtailed.

1.2 Walking through America’s Fiction: A Sampling

Though my study primarily concerns pedestrian travel in nonfiction texts, it is worth noting that walkers and walking have also played a role in American fiction. Characters who walk in fictional works do so for a myriad of reasons. Assuredly, authors use the pedestrian mode to shift characters from scene to scene and conflict to

conflict. After all, walking is often the most expedient method of movement. Yet the kind of walking that I am interested in, walking of volition and for pleasure, also shows up in stories and novels. Once one has turned his or her attention toward pedestrianism, walking seems to play a central, if often overlooked, action in American fiction throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century. Characters walk to escape matrimonial yoke and societal bondage; they walk to pursue their private obsessions and to indulge hidden sins; and they walk, like their nonfictional counterparts, to commune with and respond to the American land. One could complete an entire project on the topic of perambulatory travel in fiction, but in the interest of my thesis, I will merely provide a sampling, with limited commentary, of the walking passages discovered in America's literary catalog.

Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle" (1819) is not first short story to include a protagonist walker, yet Rip typifies the qualities of pedestrianism that are found in his true-life romantic counterparts. He yearns to escape from the "petticoat" government meted out by dame Van Winkle, and, through his rambles, he portrays a prototypical American romantic hero: youthful, innocent, and close to nature. For example, it is Rip's penchant for hiking through the woods that leads to his discovery of Henry Hudson's mystical crew and his long flagon-induced sleep. Irving begins Rip's adventure "in a long ramble of the kind on a fine autumnal day, Rip had unconsciously scrambled to

one of the highest parts of the Kaatskill mountains" (13). Ostensibly, Rip has traveled into the forest to hunt, but as he "unconsciously scrambled" to mountain peaks he transforms from sportsman to romantic walker. Rip represents one who finds the solace he was seeking by simply walking beyond the village streets and out into the freedom of New York's wild country.

Almost twenty years after Irving's Rip walks and sleeps off his trouble in the Catskill Mountains, Nathaniel Hawthorne produced a collection of short stories that brought walking to the forefront of American fiction. Of the thirty-seven stories collected in *Twice Told Tales* (1837,1841), half of them feature pedestrian travel, and some even provide an ambulatory third person narrator who invites the readers on walks through village streets and over cross-paths. Consider the following assortment of titles and lines gleaned from *Tales*:

- "Little Anne's Ramble": "Little Anne shall take ramble with me [...]" (100).
- "David Swan ": "After journeying on foot from sunrise till nearly noon of a summer's day [...]" (120).
- "The Vision of the Fountain": "I rambled into a wood of oaks, with a few walnut trees intermixed, forming a closet shade above my head." (152).

- “A Rill from the Town Pump”: “Walk up, gentlemen, walk up and help yourselves.” (87).
- “Mr. Higginbotham’s Catastrophe”: “Dominicus Pike, had traveled seven miles through solitary woods [...]. He did not look as if he started in the freshness of the morning, but had footed it all night, and meant to do the same all day.” (78).
- “Wakefield”: “Wakefield is taking his customary walk towards the dwelling which he still calls his own.” (33).
- “Night Sketches”:[...] from hence I tread firm pavements into the centre of town.” (240).
- “The Seven Vagabonds”: “Rambling on foot, in the spring of my life and summer of the year, I came one afternoon to a point which gave me the choice of three directions.” (253).
- “Foot-prints on the Sea Shore”: “Highways and cross paths are hastily traversed, and clambering down a crag, I find myself at the extremity of a long beach.” (280).

The preceding list of Hawthorne’s walking motif is by no means exhaustive in *Tales*, but it exposes that a common act such as walking can provide direct narrative commencement for a variety of stories, all with differing themes and settings. Why is

walking so prevalent in his work? What does pedestrianism offer to both the story teller and his characters? Whatever the answers, clearly walking plays an instrumental role to Hawthorne's literary style, one that heretofore has not been addressed by critics of Hawthorne's work.

In addition to the journeys found in *Tales*, Hawthorne's celebrated novel, *The Scarlet Letter*, begins with one of the shortest, yet most powerful walks in American literature – Hester Prynne's ignominious stride from the prison to the scaffold. Later in the novel, in a chapter aptly titled "A Forest Walk," Prynne is seeking out the partner of her sin, Arthur Dimmesdale, in the forest where he often lingers:

For several days, however, she vainly sought an opportunity of addressing him in some of the meditative walks which she knew him to be in the habit of taking, along the shores of the peninsula, or on the wooded hills of the neighboring country. (160)

After their reunification, Dimmesdale ambles home through the surreal world transformed by his encounter with Prynne: "The pathway among the woods seemed somehow wilder, more uncothe with its rude natural obstacles, less trodden by the feet of man, than he remembered it on his outward journey" (189). Unfortunately for Dimmesdale, the refreshed energy he felt with Prynne in the forest turns frightening as he walks home through the muddled streets of Boston. Dimmesdale's walk functions

like a private purgatory that he must overcome before he can hammer out his own confessional words and then ascend the scaffold along with Hester and their daughter, Pearl.

Other New England authors such as Herman Melville and Louisa May Alcott follow Hawthorne's lead: *Moby Dick* (1851) and *Little Women* (1868, 1869) also summon mid-century pedestrian fashions.

Even in the most land-hungry of novels, *Moby Dick*, walking makes an obligatory appearance. In the chapter "The Quarter Deck," Melville presents a darker image of a pedestrian – Captain Ahab on his deck. Ahab's one driving passion, the white whale, charts its course across the Pequod's deck manifested as circumambulatory obsession:

It was not a great while after the affair with the pipe, the one morning shortly after breakfast Ahab, as was his wont, ascended the cabin gangway to the deck.

There most sea-captains usually walk at that hour as country gentlemen, after the same meal, take a few turns in the garden. (163)

Melville's characterization of Ahab "walk[ing] at that hour as country gentlemen [...] take a few turns in garden" challenges the impression of romantic ambulation.

Certainly, there is no leisure in Ahab's gait. The irony unfolds because "country gentlemen" throughout nonfiction and fictional texts abound with an overt appreciation

of the picturesque. The natural world, however, provides no such solace for Ahab, and he clods along not admiring the view but instead raging against it.

In contrast to Ahab's paradoxical turn about the Pequod's deck, Alcott's *Little Women*, a novel stocked full of meandering strolls, offers a different kind of walk in its closing pages, a walk founded on love. The independent-minded protagonist Jo March is at last ready to give herself over to matrimony, yet true to her nonconformist personality, she meets with her suitor, the erudite Professor Bhaer, out in the rain-soaked fields where the two can talk on a common ground:

While Laurie and Amy were taking conjugal strolls over the velvet carpets, as they set their house in order, and planned a blissful future, Mr. Bhaer and Jo were enjoying promenades of a different sort, along muddy roads and sodden fields.' I always do take a walk toward evening, and I don't know why I should give it up, just because I happen to meet the Professor on his way out,' said Jo to herself [...] for though there were two paths to Meg's whichever one she took she was sure to meet him, either going or returning. He was always walking rapidly, and never seemed to see her until quite close, then he would look as if his short-sighted eyes failed to recognize the approaching lady till that moment. (643)

Jo gains agency by walking. It provides a democratizing function that would have been unavailable had she stayed indoors like her sisters and "set her house in order." In fact,

the ground is so muddy that Bhaer cannot go down on one knee to propose. He must stand before Jo, on equal footing, and offer marriage to an equal partner, not a subservient helpmate.

My final examples of walking in American fiction derive from the twentieth century and even one text from this century. I include them here to illustrate how walking characters sustain and thrive throughout the American tradition. The following exchange from opening chapter of Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) is both poignant and subtle:

It was lonely for a day or so until one morning some man, more recently arrived than I, stopped me on the road.

"How do you get to West Egg Village?" He asked helplessly.

I told him. And as I walked on I was lonely no longer. I was a guide, a pathfinder an original settler. He had casually conferred on me that freedom of the neighborhood. (8)

By simply walking through West Egg, the voice of the novel, Nick Carraway, becomes a fixture of the land, so much so that a "more recently arrived" stranger assumes that he knows the environs, dwells in the place. No doubt, too, Fitzgerald harkens back to Cooper's Natty Bumppo in Carraway's understanding that he was "a guide, a pathfinder" once he undertook his pedestrian stride.

John Steinbeck provides yet another example of fictitious walking. Most noted for his migration novel *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), Steinbeck also authored *Cannery Row* (1945), a narrative that features Doc, a scientist, who works as a marine biology collector. During one of his drives along the coastline toward the tidal pools of northern California, Doc ruminates about his collegiate days:

Once when Doc was at the University of Chicago he had love trouble and he had worked too hard. He thought it would be nice to take a very long walk. He put on a little knapsack and he walked through Indiana and Kentucky and North Carolina and Georgia clear to Florida. He walked among farmers and mountain people, among the swamp people and fishermen. And everywhere people asked him why he was walking through the country.

Because he loved true things, he tried to explain. He said he was nervous and besides he wanted to see the country, smell the ground and look at the grass and birds and trees, to savor the country, and there was no other way to do it save on foot. (77-78)

Throughout *Cannery Row*, Doc is portrayed as a seeker of truth and knowledge. Steinbeck suggests that Doc gained his love of the natural world and individualist character through direct contact and movement across the country. In addition, Doc's walk is reminiscent of another California rebel, John Muir. Readers familiar with Muir's

1000 Mile Walk to the Gulf may notice that Steinbeck's details of Doc's long-distant tour follows Muir's distinct route on his walk southward.

Once one begins to be sensitive toward pedestrian travel in fictional works, he or she will begin to sight legions of examples throughout American literature. In 2010, Joshua Ferris published a novel entitled *The Unnamed*. The protagonist Tim Farnsworth suffers from an illness which compels him to inexplicably drop whatever he is doing and set off walking for hours on end without a destination. Near the novel's conclusion, Farnsworth gives himself over to his obsession:

His condition never went into remission again, the walking never ceased.

The nature of how he walked and his relationship to it as that thing which hijacked his body and led him into the wilderness (for everywhere was a wilderness to him who had known only the interiors of homes and offices and school buildings and restaurants and courthouses and hotels) changed over time, over a long adjustment and many misfortunes. (246)

The Unnamed is bleaker than other walking accounts. Here, the pedestrian completely disconnects from his own body and also from personal relationships. "The natural world" offers no solace either, and instead of gaining insight through walking, Tim loses his identity as his life becomes "hijacked" by the urge of movement. Ferris' novel shows that pedestrianism continues to play a role in the imaginations of contemporary

authors. *The Unnamed* makes a dark statement about current American culture and landscapes, but never-the-less it may remind readers of Edgar Allan Poe's "A Man of the Crowd" (1840), a masterful study of unhinged walking and urban alienation.

1.3 Project Organization

The four chapters of "Beautiful Day. Pleasant Walk." define my notions of the varied styles and altered terrains of walking literature. The first section "Estwick Evans: Walking the Long and Solitary Way" deals with one of the most intriguing yet forgotten personalities in pedestrian literature. In 1818, Evans walked over 1000 miles from New Hampshire to Michigan seeking only "romantic truth" and what he viewed as the freedom of the American West. During his travel, he crossed one of the most formidable obstacles in Ohio – the Great Black Swamp. This chapter follows Evans through the swamp and also provides a history of the wetland as well as its current status and condition.

"John D. Godman: The Wissahickon Walker" investigates the walks of Dr. Godman, an early progenitor of the ramble genre. Godman was considered a first-rate academic among Philadelphia intellectuals when his death of tuberculosis in 1829 silenced one of the most promising minds in the field of natural history. He was one of the first naturalists to bridge the romantic impulses of the 1820's with scientific observation, and his walks along the Wissahickon Creek in Germantown, Pennsylvania,

recount his propensity for noticing the profound in everyday natural experience. This chapter also delves into the history and preservation of the Wissahickon and the ways in which other writers, such as Edgar Allan Poe, reacted to its unique beauty.

The next chapter discusses a female pedestrian, Elizabeth Fries Ellet, and her rambles through the southern landscapes of Calhoun County, South Carolina, and Tallulah Falls in north Georgia. Ellet's text, *Rambles about the Country* (1840), offers a glimpse into the world of rural Antebellum communities, and it also describes one of the Deep South's early tourist destinations of Tallulah Falls. "Elizabeth Fries Ellet: Rambles in the South" also surveys initial attitudes toward Tallulah and how hiking in the gorge has changed in the past two hundred years.

The final chapter, "Bradford Torrey: Walking the Eastern Way," discusses the ramble genre of late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and the ways in which Torrey contributed to this field. In addition, the section is concerned with Torrey's attitude toward trespassing and, in particular, his tour of the newly dedicated Civil War battlefields of Chattanooga and Chickamauga. The chapter concludes with a history of Chickamauga and the ways in which the site has been persevered for future generations of American pilgrims.

"Beautiful Day. Pleasant Walk." ends with a consideration of the future of walking literature. Lastly, I highlight personal pedestrian experiences with a brief

catalog of my favorite places to walk and commune with the ever present world of outside.

Now, on to Mr. Evans...

2 ESTWICK EVANS: WALKING THE LONG AND SOLITARY WAY

The *Quinetucket*, or Long Tidal River, creates a navigable boundary between Vermont and New Hampshire.¹ In February 1818, the river froze solid in its banks and cut a four-hundred mile avenue of ice northward toward its headwaters on the Connecticut lakes. Approaching the river from the east walked Estwick Evans, a young lawyer from Hopkinton, New Hampshire. He traveled alone, excepting his two dogs, and he must have seemed a curious figure against the winter landscape of snowdrift and bare trees. He wore a hand-crafted suit of stitched bison hides, a Kentucky long rifle strapped on his back. Even though Evans appeared out for game and more suited for the wilds of the prairies than New England, his quarry was not beaver fur nor sustenance; instead, as Evans crossed the bridge over the frozen Connecticut River and stepped into Vermont, he was embarking on a walking tour of the Great Lakes region that would take him across New York, Ohio, and into the burgeoning territory of Michigan.

Evans reflected on his walk across the frozen north in his elaborately titled memoir *A Pedestrious Tour of Four Thousand Miles through the Western States and*

¹The Connecticut River is the longest in New England. It boasts a total length of 407 miles and covers a drainage basin of over 11,000 square miles. The river played an important role in the foundations of the region. In an effort to preserve its legacy, The University of Massachusetts, College of Natural Resources and Mathematics hosts a web page dedicated to history and biology of the river.

*Territories, During the Winter and Spring of 1818, Interspersed with Brief Reflections Upon a Great Variety of Topics: Religious, Moral, Political, Sentimental, &c &c.*² I first became aware of Evans' travels in Roderick Nash's seminal work *Wilderness and the American Mind*. Nash considers Evans' tour as reflective of a novel romanticism, one not untypical of other early nineteenth century intellectuals.³ These genteel and urbane professionals viewed America as losing its wild heritage to agriculture and deforestation. Nash argues that Evans reacted against an ever increasing pastoral landscape when "it was possible to live and even to travel widely without coming into contact with wild country. Increasingly people lived on established farms or in cities where they did not experience the hardships and fears of the wilderness" (57). Nash offers few details concerning Evans' walk, and after two brief paragraphs that consider Evans' "philosophy put to practice" (56), the intrepid walker falls once again behind a veil of obscurity. In the preface to *Pedestrious Tour*, Evans anticipates his text's dim reception:

It will be readily perceived, that a work of this kind does not admit of the display of much reasoning or erudition; and I shall speak as little of myself as will be

²From here-after, *Pedestrious Tour*. In 1904, Reuben Gold Thwaites published *Early Western Travels: 1748-1846*. Volume VIII of the series includes annotated editions of *Buttrick's Voyages, 1812-1819* and *Evans's Pedestrious Tour, 1818*. In addition to preserving both of these early travel texts, Thwaites' publication provides invaluable bibliographic information on both travelers.

³ See Roderick Nash's *Wilderness and the America Mind*. Pgs 10-60.

consistent with the nature of the publication. This little volume cannot possible merit much praise; and I trust that it will escape unqualified censure. (Preface, *Evans*)

To be sure, Evans' "little volume" has lacked neither merit nor censure, and his contribution to American letters has been but a footnote, relegated to esoteric study. But regardless of his work's stature, Evans' work provides a significant voice to the subgenre of the literature of walking in America. In addition to Evans' contribution to the chronicles of pedestrianism with his impressive feat of traversing the country's northern boundary, Evans' observations of the northeast and Great Lakes region, particularly Ohio's Great Black Swamp, suggest a sensibility that moves beyond mere romantic earnestness toward a more radical understanding of nature which intensifies as his narrative unfolds. Evans' claim that his text lacks "reasoning and erudition" is perhaps nothing more than conventional posturing. By ostensibly removing the burden of audience and criticism, Evans enforces his position as a self-made vagabond, a walker without a dowry to civilized life. This pose of indifference toward publishing is confirmed earlier in the preface when Evans confides that *Pedestrious Tour* was conceived as an afterthought to his walk, and was printed solely "by the request of my fellow-citizens."

Whether or not Evans planned to published his account remains unknown, yet the scant details of his personal history suggest a figure who did not shy away from self-promotion. Evans' confidence and interests hint at one who possessed dueling appetites for both private contemplation and public recognition. The walk through the landscapes of the Great Lakes provided Evans an excess of solitude, yet in other ways Evans seems to prefigure the call of Ralph Waldo Emerson's self-distinguished and civically-minded American. Born in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in 1787, he was the first man in the state's history to be admitted into the Bar without formal education. While practicing law, Evans exhibited a social conscience that reflected his humble upbringing; he specialized in representing local sailors and other working-class persons. Later, Evans used his experience as a New England attorney to promote his ambition and interest in public service. The years following his walk were active ones: he served in the New Hampshire legislature from 1822 to 1824, volunteered to fight in Greece's revolution against Turkey in 1832 (arriving too late for action), and relocated to Washington D.C., where he continued to practice law and hold minor public offices. Toward the end of his life, Evans made one final bold gesture by running an obviously unsuccessful bid for the presidency of the United States in 1864 at nearly eighty years of age.⁴

⁴In 1864, Evans issued a broadside which outlined his life and also listed his reasons for running for president. Written years after his walk, he never-the-less cited the tour as one of the highlights of his life.

As a New England attorney, Evans must have been cognizant of the emerging number of travel and tour accounts that were in vogue and gaining wider audiences.⁵ In *American Writers and the Picturesque Tour*, Beth L. Lueck contends that the years following The War of 1812 were awash with guides written by Americans seeking to define and promote their own country against a surplus of European travel narratives. Lueck argues that American travelers “adapted these conventions [of Europeans] for a national literature, [one] that seized upon an essentially British form that originated in the late eighteenth century and modified it for their own use” (5). Evans’ account, inevitably possesses many of the stock ornamentations of frontier travel literature. Tena Lea Helton notes in “The Literary Frontier: Creating an American Nation (1820-1840)” that “the genre requirements for frontier journals, include [...] features such as chronological sequencing and single stable voice, as well as numerous adventures with wildlife and Indians and philosophical ponderings about nature” (86). However willing Evans was to remain true to the genre, we must remain mindful that Evans’ walk occurred in 1818, three years before the British pedestrian William Hazlitt published one of the hallmarks of walking literature, “On Going a Journey” (1821). Hazlitt’s work helped to popularize walking both in England and America, even beyond the cult of romanticism, and it embarks with words that Evans would have surely concurred:

⁵See Beth L. Lueck’s Introduction to *American Writers and Picturesque Tour*. Pgs 3-30.

“One of the pleasantest things in the world is going on a journey; but I like to go by myself” (14).

Like other travel accounts, Evans’ text is – to use Rebecca Solnit's term – episodic; the narrative provides “no overarching plot, except for the obvious one of getting from point A to point B” (Solnit 127). Additionally, *Pedestrious Tour*, as the full title suggests, is interspersed with digressions that surround a multitude of early nineteenth century intellectual concerns: emigration to western states and territories, agriculture practices, land improvement, Native American affairs, women’s education, slavery, and patriotic ruminations on the still fresh War of 1812. All of these topics were intensely debated during Evans’ time and were emerging as the commonplace and expected tropes of American travel literature. I, however, find the digressions secondary to Evans’ actual movement through and response to the landscape. Indeed the text finds, for all of its idiosyncratic observations and at times didactic assertions, its most lively voice when Evans moves beyond the settled states of New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York and beyond even the expected boundaries of the fashionable tour. The initial miles of Evans’ walk were decidedly civic in their focus, but, as I will discuss in the Great Black Swamp section, it is in the middle wild-lands between Detroit and New York that *Pedestrious Tour* features Evans’ most ambitious walking and also his most intimate assessment of the American wilderness.

Even though Evans himself is included in this group of romantic vagabonds traveling to “discover” their America, the account of his 1818 walk offers no overt allusions or historical precedent for the journey, and his work suggests no literary antecedent. However, in addition to other travel accounts, Evans was certainly influenced by J. Hector J. St. John de Crevecoeur’s *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782) and Thomas Jefferson’s *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1781). Both works “envisioned ‘improvement’ over already inhabited country, and propagandists from [...] the Louisiana Purchase described the interior as a ‘future field of happiness’ for the construction of the United States” (Hallock 150). Evans’ own attitudes about the future destiny of America and its people echo the sentiments of Crevecoeur’s famous query and answer: “What, then, is the American, this new man? [...] He is an American, who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds” (54). Evans’ narrative, in short, was both a product of, and a contribution to, the great national debate of what it meant to be an American and what the American landscape meant to its citizens and indigenous tribes. Evans’ way of dissecting these questions about the identity and fate of America was to walk the terrain, to see for himself what this “new mode of life” offered and promised.

Another literary influence that may have inspired Evans' walk and writings was Alexander Wilson's epic poem "The Foresters: Description of a Pedestrian Tour to the Falls of Niagara, In the Autumn of 1804." Wilson, a celebrated ornithologist and illustrator, traveled widely throughout the hinterlands of the United States collecting and naming bird species. He was, like William Bartram, his mentor, one of earliest promoters of wild America. A consummate wanderer throughout his life, Wilson lamented in an April, 1807, letter to Bartram about Philadelphia's cosmopolitan confines: "[...] If I don't launch out into the woods and fields oftner than I have done these twelve months, may I be transformed into a street musician..." (qtd. in Hunter 263).

The Scottish-born Wilson published "Foresters" serially in the *Philadelphia Port Folio* in 1809 and 1810. The highly quixotic poem traces Wilson's long-distance trek, with two companions, his nephew William Duncan and a friend Isaac Leech, from Pennsylvania to New York. The poem reaches its climatic end at the edge of the "the great cataract" of Niagara Falls (McKinsey 39-40). Even though "The Foresters" suffers from mawkish language and an overabundance of allusion to Greek deities, it represents one of the finest early nineteenth century American poems about walking and the joy of travel. Departing from the "banks of Schuylkill" [sic] in autumn 1804, the

text's initial lines celebrate the intrepidness of the walkers and also captures the pleasure of embarkation:

Bound on a tour wide northern forests through,
 And bade our parting friends a short adieu;
 Three cheerful partners, Duncan was the guide,
 Young, gay, and active, to the forest tried,
 A stick and knapsack all his little store,
 With these, whole regions Duncan could explore,
 Could trace the path to other eyes unseen,
 Tell where the panther, deer, or bear had been,
 The long dull day through swamp and forest roam,
 Strike up his fire and find himself at home;
 Untie his wallet, taste his frugal store,
 And under shelbury bark profoundly snore.
 And soon as morning cheered the forest scene,
 Resume his knapsack and his path again. (Wilson 61-76)

"The Foresters" continues for over 2000 lines as it recounts the hardships of weather, the solitude and beauty of America's forests, the hospitality of the backwoodsmen, and finally the language-failing power of Niagara Falls. Wilson's poem, written on the cusp

of American romantic influence “won immediate success.” Readers delighted in poet’s heroic descriptions of “the path untrod before” (Huth 25). Evans likely had been familiar with Wilson’s work; if so, he surely would have appreciated the poem’s landscape description, but he also would have found fortitude and motivation from the sheer exuberance of Wilson’s style. Written in first person, Wilson, in a gesture of pre-Whitman insight, places himself, the walker, as the hero and central figure of the poem. It is through the voice of traveler as purveyor of insight that “The Foresters” musters its energy. Also, the text’s lifted language valorizes walking for the sake of walking and traveling as an end in its self. After all, Niagara Falls had been “discovered” many years before Wilson’s sighting, but it was his journey to the brink that ushered the most profound delights of all. Alexander Wilson’s model as a radical pedestrian would serve Evans well as he marched out on his own tour.

Evans departed Hopkinton, New Hampshire, on February 2, 1818, and would not return for over six months. It should be noted that even though Evans titled his account *Pedestrious Tour of Four Thousand Miles*, his exclusively pedestrian mode of travel ceased after reaching Detroit, roughly halfway through the text and, according to Evans, after walking “about one thousand miles” (215). Through the remainder of the narrative, Evans supplemented his walking with drifts aboard ships, riverboats, and rafts as he ferried across the Great Lakes and then floated the Tennessee, Ohio, and

Mississippi Rivers southward toward New Orleans. The concluding pages of *Pedestrious Tour* narrate Evans' sail through the Gulf of Mexico and around the eastern seaboard, northward en route for Boston, Massachusetts.⁶ Because of Evans' varied mode of travel after his arrival in Detroit, I have chosen to focus this chapter on the first half of his tour where he was faithful to pedestrianism. Also, as previously stated, this chapter's later pages concentrate on Evans' walk through and response to the all but forgotten Black Swamp region of northern Ohio.

Evans proclaims in the early pages of *Pedestrious Tour* that his walk was of great national import, far weightier than his previous public occupation as an attorney:

“Even in public life we please ourselves with the tinsel of narrow views, whilst we disregard those great principles of national policy which alone can render us great”

(19). It is this broadening of the self to “great principles of national import” that seems to drive Evans' tour. When queried as to why he would undertake such a walk, Evans resounds in what will become characteristic enthusiasm:

My views were various. Besides the ordinary advantages of travel, and of

becoming acquainted with a country comparatively but little known, I wish to

⁶ While sailing around the gulf and eastern seaboard, Evans describes the Cuban shoreline and comments on America's wealth of marine life. Evans writes that the entire water passage from New Orleans to Boston took thirty days to complete. Pgs 360-364.

acquire the simplicity, Native feelings and virtues of savage life, to divest of the factitious habits, prejudices and imperfections of civilization; to become a citizen of the world; and to find, amidst the solitude and grandeur of the western wilds, more correct views of human nature and of the true interests of man. (102)

Undoubtedly, Evans' opinions toward travel and society were tinged with nascent romantic attitudes and with an urge toward the picturesque. Consider, for example, Evans' words buttressed against Jean-Jacques Rousseau's own thoughts on social order found in his *Confessions Book 8*:

[W]andering deep into the forest, I sought and I found the vision of those primitive times [...] I demolished the petty lies of mankind; I dared to strip man's nature naked, to follow the progress of time, and trace the things which have distorted it; and by comparing man as he has made himself with man as he is by nature I showed him in his pretended perfection the source of his true misery. (qtd. in Harrison 129)

Evans' "factitious habits" and Rousseau's "pretended perfection" walk hand in hand away from the polite niceties that had shrouded both European and American from what "he is by nature." It is only through a good long walk or pilgrimage "deep into the forest" or "amidst the solitude and grandeur of the western wilds," as Evans put it, that individuals could trudge off the affectations of superfluous pomp. Henry David

Thoreau, writing almost twenty-five years after Evans, in *Walden*, reinforces and ultimately expands on Evans' and Rousseau's thoughts:

Let us settle ourselves [...] and wedge *our feet downward* through the mud and slush of opinion, and prejudice, and tradition, and delusion, and appearance [...] till we come to a hard bottom and rocks in place, [...] which we can call reality [...] that future ages might know how deep a freshet of shams and appearances had gathered from time to time. (my italics 148)

Thoreau's crucial urge to "wedge our feet downward" functions simultaneously as a metaphor and as a concrete imperative for obtaining truth, and it represents a sentiment that Evans would have fully endorsed. Evans valued putting "feet downward" as a tangible access point into a greater reality. But why was walking seen as a method for gaining agency into the more true and promised democracy of America? For Evans, familiarity with the hardships of weather and the "privations" of hunger and weariness purged all appearances and exposed the walker to his actual self and not the personality created by societal expectation. This spiritual reinvention thrives as one of the cornerstones of American experience. Also, we must not neglect that the physical freedom of the walking offered for American pedestrians the opportunity to literally out walk the known roads and enter into lands that few Euro-Americans had encountered first hand. Evans' yearning for authentic experience and

“virtue of savage life” was tintured with what can only be viewed as a yearning for the primitive. Instead of walking during the most advantageous of seasons, Evans sought discomfort and a challenge: “The season of snows was preferred, that I might experience the pleasure of suffering and the novelty of danger” (102). By traveling alone in the New England winter, Evans’ underpinning romantic impulses to seek the “sublime inspirations of Nature” were supported by a willingness to confront danger and to risk bodily harm (101).

Whatever his reasons for trekking through the winter, Evans surely delighted in the thought that traveling through extreme cold would require a mode of dress uncustomary to his professional training as an attorney or to the accepted fashions of the East. Evans was so pleased with his primitive garb that he described it in detail:

Mine was a close dress consisting of buffalo skins. On my shoulders were the epaulettes made of the long hair of the animal; and they were for the purpose of shielding the shoulder from rain. Around my neck and under one arm was strapped a double leather case, with brass chargers, for shot and ball; and under the other arm a case for powder strapped in the same way, and also having a brass charger. Around the waist was a belt, with a brace of pistols, a dirk, two side cases for pistol balls, and a case for moulds and screw. Also around the

waist was buckled an Indian apron, which fell behind [...]. My cap and gloves were made of fur, my moccasins were of deerskin, and on my shoulder

I carried a six-foot rifle. The partners of my toils were two faithful dogs. (103)

For Evans, the wearing of buffalo and deer hides offered more than protection against the elements. Beyond its practical use, the rustic outfit also served to classify Evans as a traveler, independent from greater society. No longer bound by the mores of culture, the uniform reflected Evans' newfound status as a wanderer.

The opening page of *Pedestrious Tour* possesses the text's sole illustration. The etching showcases Evans' rude "habiliments" set against a snow-clad American landscape. In it Evans stands with his right hand on his hip as he clutches a fur hat, while the left arm is self-consciously positioned in the air, pawing a long rifle. The length of his body is covered in tight, brown fur interposed with what appears to be small pistols. Evans' beardless face tilts toward the west, lips pursed and eyes deep-set. Finally, his left leg bends outward as if he is contemplating a step. The background features two dogs and a snow-covered hill. The effect of the image is simultaneously idealistic and endearing, yet Evans does not mention posing for the sketch, and the awkwardness of his stance suggests that it was drawn without a model.



Figure 2.1: Estwick Evans, presented on the opening page *Pedestrious Tour*.

Curiously, the etching of Evans is reminiscent to Charles B.J.F. Saint-Memin's engraving of a portrait of Meriwether Lewis completed in 1807. In it Lewis stands proudly facing the audience. Thomas Hallock observes how "the clean-shaven and (suspiciously) well-scrubbed Lewis poses before snow-capped peaks, wearing the tippet Cameahwait presented to him" (136). When viewed together, the two images hold a striking conversation: On one hand stands Evans, who lowers his fur cap, perhaps to show respect to the icon Lewis. In addition, he looks away from spectators as a way of offering deference to the American hero. On the other hand, Lewis' steady gaze exudes confidence and newfound distinction, while Evans' far-away stare occupies the presence of a dreamer rather than a discoverer and governmental agent. Even the backgrounds of the two portraits possess mirror reflections. The landscape behind

Evans is decidedly pastoral; the hills are rounded and partially deforested. New England had become like old England; the wild had been tamed. Further, the etching provides a visual of New England's forest economy that transformed Vermont and New Hampshire's woodlands into "natural resources [and] commodities to be traded on the market" (Merchant 32). In contrast, Lewis stands in front of a mountain range that is far more formidable and majestic than Evans' hill-country. If Evans' terrain confirms past dominance of the American landscape, then Lewis' gallant mountains promote an ambitious and spiritual dream that would in Evans' lifetime come to be recognized as manifest destiny.



Figure 2.2: Meriwether Lewis, by Charles B.J.F. Saint-Memin (1807).

Hallock goes on to note that “the portrait misleadingly depicts exploration as solitary venture” (136). In this regard, perhaps Evans’ picture is the more honest of the two. Truly, the trans-continental exploration of America’s interior was a military affair; from 1804 to 1806, the Corps of Discovery employed over thirty-three men and Sacagawea to navigate the expanses of the country. One would be loath to wonder how far Lewis would have survived had he walked solo toward the Pacific. Conversely, by the time Evans began his walk, twelve years after the Corps return, solo “exploration” was possible when traveling toward the frontier of Michigan. Evans was one of the first whose tour was more of what we understand now as a “holiday” than either an exploration of conquest or a venture of pioneering. It was in this role as peripatetic wanderer, that Evans raised eyebrows of the settled and working-class Americans he met along the road.

Evans conceded that his buffalo clothes and pedestrian travel were perceived as strange by his fellow countrymen. For example, as he neared Amherst, New Hampshire, in a heavy evening snow, Evans confided that “the ladies of the [town], supposing me an Indian, barred the doors against me” (104). He goes on to tell how “from the lateness of the afternoon and from my being covered with snow, some captious scribblers took the liberty, in the papers of the day, to be impudent. Could I condescend to be offended with them, I should here tender my forgiveness” (105). In

fact, Evans' walk *was* noted by the town's "captious scribblers." The February 7, 1818, edition of Amherst's local paper, the *Farmer's Cabinet*, observed "[Evans] passed thro' this town the present week, clad in buffalo dress, from head to foot, armed with a brace of pistols, a rifle, and – *two dogs*. His appearance on the road we learn was a great annoyance to women, children, and horses" (*Farmer's Cabinet*). The italicized "two dogs" suggests that it was Evans' large canines, Tyger and Pomp, which caused the most "annoyance" to the townspeople. Evans later described his dogs as "very large and accustomed to strife in the woods" (197). Tyger was a one-eyed hound called "grave and intrepid" while Pomp "was active, generous, affectionate, and in courage and perseverance unrivalled" (197). Unfortunately for Evans, his dogs were killed by wolves sometime after the Amherst incident near Ohio's Black Swamp. Their loss affected him to a "listlessness of sorrow" (197).

The mocking that Evans received from the Amherst publication displays his aloof societal status, yet according to Evans, most villagers treated him kindly and some regarded him as a minor celebrity. Apparently his walking caused the locals to react with more curiosity than aspersion:

People seldom knew from whence I came, or what was my place of destination
 [...]speculation was as various as the dispositions and capacities of individuals.
 Some honored me with the idea that I was Bonaparte in disguise; and some

secretly suggested that I was a Wizard [...] Some too, imagined me an Icelander; and some a British Spy. A few treated me with rudeness, many in a very gentlemanly manner, and some, not knowing what to make of my appearance conferred upon me the title of General and invited me to drink with them (123).

Walkers have often prompted suspicion. Robin Jarvis observes that early British romantic pedestrians, over twenty years before Evans' travel, were likewise treated with astonishment by locals as they passed through rural villages. Jarvin employs Samuel Taylor Coleridge's companion Joseph Hucks' observations about their reception among the English country folk during a 1794 walk: "[we] sometimes excite[ed] the risible muscles' of local people, and some alarm, being occasionally mistaken for Frenchmen, but in general [we] encounter[ed] no special difficulties or hostiles" (qtd. in Jarvis 11). The "risible muscles" or laugh of the locals were not enough to deter either the English walkers or Evans who took the deriding as a type of badge of a traveler and further exhibited their free status as autonomous citizens, perhaps above the ridicule of provincials.

The oddity regarding walkers has endured long after Evans' tour. Charles Konopa, a federal park ranger and Appalachian Trail hiker, considers the reaction a pedestrian received who mirrored John Muir's celebrated 1867 solo walk from Indiana to Florida. The twentieth century enactor was hardly applauded for his efforts:

Now, as this man followed Muir's ghostly track down dusty roads and through villages, people began to ask why he walked. When he replied that it was for his own pleasure they reacted as to a hateful thing. Hardly anyone seemed to believe him. When he said [...] that he was on foot because Muir was on foot, people frowned and asked why he didn't use a car – or even a motorcycle. Certainly, the driver is more efficient at covering territory than the pedestrian. It was clear that his explanations were unsatisfactory. (308-309)

Even if Evans, and those who walked before and after him, suffered the mild censure of adult villagers, the township's youth were often the most willing to express interest in the traveler's walk. It was the young, Evans professed, who were particularly attracted to his mode of transport and attire. To literary minded children of New England, he must have appeared clad in furs and ordinances like the embodiment of Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, as he typified the islander's primitive appearance: "*When I came to [New] England, I was as perfect a Stranger to the entire World as if I had never been known there*" (214). The village children surrounded Evans as he entered into townships and encircled him, hoping, after he gained their trust, for stories of the forest:

Wherever I stopped, in the course through the settled parts of the country, I was much pleased with the interest which my appearance excited in children. There was a conflict exhibited in their countenances between the fears implanted by

domestic education, and the native fondness of man for the hunter state. By my assuming, however, the aspect and the smile of civilization, they would come to my arms of fur, and listen attentively to the simple stories of the chase. (115)

For Evans, the dichotomy between “fears implanted by domestic education” and “the native fondness of man for the hunter state” illustrate the romantic, and Rousseauian notion that societal demands corrupt humankind, and therefore train children away from a natural affinity, or “fondness,” for a more primitive state. The children, thus corrupted, were rightly affirmed of Evans’ magnanimity when he assumed the “smile of civilization,” thereby earning their trust. At one point Evans further exhibited his dual nature as both “gentleman” and “wildman” when he was asked to mediate a dispute: “Upon one occasion a serious legal question [...] was introduced; and being a limb of the Law, I involuntarily made an observation on it. Bets soon began to run high, and the *Pedestrian* was appointed umpire” (my italics 129). Here, the *Pedestrian* walks society’s boundary rope. One on side, the villagers perceived him as a feral transient moving afoot through their town, yet once Evans presented his training as an attorney and displayed his gentlemanly demeanor, the townsfolk positioned him as one from whom to seek counsel. Evans’ involvement with the citizens and their “legal question” invite irony and call to question Evans’ own primitive status. However willing he was

to wear the hide and seem wild, when the opportunity arrived, Evans was clearly available to display a level of civil training far beyond his dress.

Evans' walk through New Hampshire and Vermont served as a paean to his native New England. The landscape of his home states were filled with what Evans viewed as an "everlasting abode of liberty" (105). In them he observed hamlets and towns which "render [...] fine grazing" (106), and people of "good nature" (107). New England, long settled, offered for Evans a central pastoral touchstone from which he was to judge the rest the country. It was in New England, too, that Evans earned his legs. Early in *Pedestrious Tour*, he confessed that he was out of shape for the trip but soon became toughed by the road: "My first day's travel was only eight miles. In a short time, however, my daily progress was from fifteen to twenty miles, through trackless snows and tremendous mountains" (103).

Even though the February weather remained quite harsh, Evans' tone throughout the New England tour remains one of exuberance, and as he crossed into New York, Evans shifted from a past verbal tense into a present one as a means of heightening the pathos of his self-imposed exile: "I am now upon the borders of my own peculiar country. A single step carries me from New Hampshire; and when I shall again behold her pleasant hills is uncertain – Perhaps never!" (108).

Evans' hyperbolic dedication to the "mountains of New Hampshire" (109) is coupled with his favorable impression of New York State. *Pedestrious Tour's* New York section provides Evans' most elaborate digressions. The reasons for this are readily apparent. To Evans, New York represented the most fully developed country-state in the Union:

The state of New York is very conspicuous for her public spirit. She is affording every facility, within the grasp of her mighty genius and resources, to her inland commerce. In arts, and arms, and internal improvement, she is already a Rome in miniature, and her grand Canal will vie with those of China and the Russian Empire. (119)

New York's status as a "mighty republic" and emerging power inspired Evans to muse on civic subjects. While walking through New York, he offered his opinions about such wide reaching topics as westward emigration, agriculture, and Native Americans (109). New York's advanced municipalities suggested a national progress that was undoubtedly fated for greatness. From the on-going construction of the Erie Canal (launched in 1817) to the strength of New York's militia, Evans concluded that "She could contend alone and unassisted with Great Britain" (119). Clearly, the rivalry between Europe and America, compounded by wounds from the War of 1812, weighed

on the minds of the populace as Evans walked through a state that shared the shores of The Great Lakes and Niagara Falls with British-held Canada.

A tangible symbol of New York's republican power was the newly constructed western turnpike. Roads throughout early nineteenth century America were notoriously bad, plagued by washouts, downed trees, and highway men. The series of toll roads that created the western turnpike ran in a generally east-west direction. Beginning in Albany, the turnpike provided for Evans and other travelers a more direct and consistent route across the state.⁷ The turnpike was by no means a roman road; however, Evans was able to make good time walking its trace. Throughout the eastern half of New York, *Pedestrious Tour* remains silent on the road's condition, other than recording "the snow likewise was remarkably deep" (127). It is by negation, however, that Evans suggested the comparative health of the turnpike. The towns he cataloged along the way, "I traveled through Brutus, Aurelius, Auburn, Cayuga, Junis, and Waterloo" (127), help to track his progressive and unimpeded walk westward.

Without question, the western half of New York found Evans traveling though wilder and less populated regions. It was here far removed from "the face of civilization" that Evans encountered a number of Native American villages and also

⁷See Peter J. Hugill's text *Upstate Arcadia: Landscape, Aesthetics, and the Triumph of Social Differentiation in America* for analysis on creation of the western turnpike. Pgs 62-63.

individual native walkers (149). Evans did not avoid the indigenous abodes; instead he sought them out, perhaps as a means of resupply or companionship. The following scene was typical of Evans' walk through this part of the country as the western turnpike became, in some places, less easily distinguished and more rugged for want of travel: "Towards evening, as I was traveling through a dark wood, I discovered what I presumed to be an Indian trail, and for the sake of adventure, concluded to follow it. It snowed fast, darkness was approaching, and the wilderness presented a dreary aspect" (150). Evans received fine hospitality from the indigenous villagers, and they seemed as inquisitive as white settlers about his walk: "many came here to see me, and seemed desirous to know from whence I came whither I was going, &c." (152). Evans tarried in the different villages for several days, taking meals with the tribes and observing such rituals as afforded by the people. Before leaving their company, he "purchased a pair of deer-skin moccasins" and then continued on toward Fort Niagara and to the Falls beyond (155). It was this same country that would later gain national fame from James Fenimore Cooper's portrayal of western New York in his *Leatherstocking Saga*.

Ever since Louis Hennepin's "discovery" of Niagara Falls in 1697, calling it a "Prodigy of Nature" and a "din [...] more deafning [sic] than thunder," the "cataract" has played a paramount role in the mind of Anglo-Americans (Revie 17,24).

Throughout the early years of the nineteenth century, the American imagination

considered Niagara the crowning example of sublime nature on the continent (before further westward expansion would expose such wonders as the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, sequoia forests, and Yosemite Valley). It is not surprising then that Niagara Falls would become, especially in the years following Evans' tour, one of the major travelers' destinations and even one of the first developed tourists' meccas in America.⁸ Changes to the falls' "wild" status were underway even during Evans' visit. He observed that "from the main land to [Goat Island] a bridge has been recently built; and I understand, that hotel is soon to be erected on the island, for the accommodation of those who may visit the falls" (178).

By the time Evans encountered the falls in 1818, much ink had been spilled touting their "wondrous" quality. Perhaps this surplus of expression aimed at the scene's grandeur obfuscated his sight. How can we see with fresh eyes the over-wrought, the over-viewed? Evans complained, "[...] I expected too much. I confess that I was disappointed, both with respect to the height of the falls, and the quality of water propelled over them in a given time" (174). Because of this disappointment with the falls themselves, Evans turned his attention to the rapids just above the plummet on the

⁸ See Linda L Revie's chapter "Challenges of the Niagara Sublime" in *The Niagara Companion* for a full discussion of travelers' observations and tourist development. Pgs 59-112.

Niagara River. The scene displays one of Evans' most telling adherences to Edmund Burke's notion of sublimity⁹:

The trees near the falls were all prostrated by the weight of congealed vapor, and seemed to worship, most devotedly, the Great Author of this grand spectacle. A lovely, yet fearful rainbow, arched the river below; and numerous gulls, were obscurely seen sailing through the thick exhalations which filled the whole space to the Canada side. – Charon and his boat only were want to complete the scene.

(175)

The image of rapids brimming with “congealed vapour” that “seemed to worship [...] the Great Author” teem with “the association of God and Wild nature” (Nash 46). In addition, the oxymoronic use of “fearful rainbow” showcases Evans' understanding and willingness to play with the fashionable conventions of the sublime that associated “objects of great dimension” and “darkness” with combined otherworldly beauty and terror. Moreover, the praise of the river, rather than the falls, provided Evans a niche in the pedestrian's reflection of the panorama. By underplaying the beauty of the falls and

⁹ Edmund Burke's influential *Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) argues that grand and evocative scenes in nature, such as mountain crags and torrential waters, expose the viewer to dueling and simultaneous emotions of fear and attraction. This treatise, along with William Gilpin's *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; and On Sketching Landscape* (1792), helped to solidify and popularized English (and American) landscape aesthetics throughout the late eighteenth and well into the nineteenth centuries. Both works provided travelers with the conventions and language of “proper” landscape appreciation.

by stating that “many of the descriptions which travelers have given are erroneous in point of fact, and ridiculous in point of imagery,” Evans evaded literary competition and the burden of depiction (175). He turned his eye away from the precipice and was able to, in his estimation, depict a scene that was no less compelling but more original than if he had written on Niagara’s most celebrated feature.

For many travelers to Niagara, the falls constituted the end of a journey, the climax of the road (consider Wilson’s “The Foresters”). After all, for years the “civilized” pathways terminated at Lakes Erie and Ontario, and travelers were more often than not compelled to either return the way they came or take passage across Lake Ontario and up the St. Lawrence River to Montreal.¹⁰ Evans, however, was not the typical traveler. Departing Niagara Falls, Evans walked southward through the village of Black Rock and on toward Buffalo, New York. Tramping across the War of 1812’s battlefields, Evans was compelled to muse upon the juxtaposition between the current picturesque quality of the land and former violence: “Here the traveler is sensibly impressed by the contrast, between the present solitary aspect of the adjacent country, and the scenes which it presented, during those military operations here, which furnish so bright a paper in the records of American prowess” (182). Just as in Evans’ affected language of sublimity toward Niagara’s rapids, his nostalgic disposition about the slim

¹⁰ See Lueck’s maps of fashionable nineteenth century walking tours. Found in *American Writers and the Picturesque Tour*. Pg 2.

victory of the War of 1812 was in part a fashion of post-war travel literature. Elizabeth McKinsey writes that “travelers began visiting the battle sites and their impressions there became as ubiquitous in the literature as those from Table Rock or from under the impending cliff” (51). She goes on to cite from Mrs. William Minot’s “Sketches of Scenery on the Niagara River” (1816): “The Falls of Niagara have been described; but the battles that have been fought in their vicinity, and the various fortune which influenced the events of the late war, have given strong additional interest to the scenery” (qtd. in McKinsey 51). Evans’ admittedly nationalistic tendency to commingle the memory of heroics against the “solitary country” further grappled the mantle of travel literature away from European writers who tended to compare America with their home continents. Not only could the American landscape compete, and in many ways outshine its European counterpart, America was now mature enough to have developed its own myths and triumphs. Europe’s lionized history was being transplanted by New World tales and romanticized, Yankee heroes. Mary Louise Pratt observes in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* this trend of literary emancipation: “Romanticism consists, among other things, of shifts in relations between Europe and other parts of the world – notably the Americas, which are, precisely, liberating themselves from Europe” (138).

After his arrival and subsequent departure from Buffalo, Evans' route southward took him along the borders of Lake Erie. Evans followed the shoreline or would trek inland hunting for game. Completely unmoored from anything resembling a turnpike, his course grew more adventurous as his serpentine walk removed further from inhabited lands: "on the 26th of February I had commenced the long and solitary way, bounded on my right by Lake Erie, presenting an ocean of ice, and on my left by a vast wilderness. In looking back I remembered toils and privations, which had put my resolution to the test" (185). Evans reached the state of Pennsylvania, forty miles from Buffalo, and though his walk through the state was comparatively brief – Pennsylvania's lake shore possesses less than sixty miles of coast – it did produce one of Evans' more impacting responses to both landscape and walking. The existential tone that he exhibits in the following paragraph is uncharacteristic for Evans. However, the dejection gives readers fuller insight into the walker's character as it humanizes him and presents a man capable of deep introspection and even loneliness:

Until about the first of March the weather was uninterruptedly severe; and although the country is generally infested with bears and wolves, and furnishes almost every kind of game, I had not, previous to this period, seen anything, relative to this particular, worthy of remark. All nature, fast bound in the icy arms of winter, was mute. I looked towards the Lake, but it spake not. I asked a

reason of the trees, but even their branches did not whisper to me. The traveller was the only living thing. Upon the bosom of the Lake he could see, that in the very frolic of its waves, a sudden and bitter chill had fixed in disappointment the smile of its delight. Thus man, in the unsuspecting season of happiness, feels the deadly pressure of unrelenting sorrow. (186)

This compelling and paradoxical excerpt presents Evans at his most melancholic.

Romantic optimism, and perhaps God himself, seemed have abandoned him to the elements, and nothing save the movement of the walker's own legs pumped any life.

At least two thematic elements are at work in the former excerpt. First, by this point in the narrative, Evans had been afield for nearly a month, walking at times over twenty miles a day. The very real and corporal act of trudging bodily along the trail day by day encourages fatigue and a type of pilgrim's blues that produces tunnel vision, creating the feeling of a never-ending path of penitence. Everything fades except the road ahead. Also, the passage reads as if Evans had outwalked his own literary tropes. For example, when Evans traveled in New England and New York he could navigate his trip at least psychologically around other tours and other works, involve digressions, and speak on the local populaces. Further, when he arrived in Niagara there was already an expectation of discovery, a tradition and foundation concerning how one was to experience Niagara. Evans had experimented with many of the

dramatic elements of travel literature throughout his walk, but now he was beyond the boundary of both his genteel romantic predecessors and the imaginative realm of the literary travel. One stark truth remained – “The traveller was the only living thing” (186). The walk itself had become paramount and for now, at least, even the landscape had fallen away and “was mute.”

The previous episode, while not the final time Evans would write about his melancholy, functions as the text’s nadir, but *Pedestrious Tour* is never long in dwelling on a sole topic, and the next paragraph begins with an erasure of the previous lyrical sadness. This one sentence paragraph again inflates the text’s tone. Ready to begin anew, Evan’s matter-of-factly states, “Leaving the Pennsylvania line, I entered the celebrated Connecticut Reserve, called New Connecticut” (186). New Connecticut is now within the precincts of contemporary Ohio, and once Evans crossed into the state, the weather turned for the worse. It was late winter, but the frozen weather remained. With no other recourse, Evans pushed on: “I traveled, during the whole of the storm, in the belief that continual motion was necessary to preserve my health” (187).

Through every passing mile, Evans rambled nearer and nearer to the most formidable natural obstacle that he would face throughout his long tour – the Great Black Swamp. It was within the Black Swamp’s borders that Evans’ mettle would be

challenged. Here he was to walk his most rugged miles and to earn his finest vision of American wilderness.

Few outside of northern Ohio are aware of the Great Black Swamp, yet in terms of size and variety of flora and fauna it was once one of the most impressive wetlands in the United States. Even scholarly texts have neglected to fully discuss the swamp's role in American history and literature. For example, David C. Miller's otherwise impressive study *Dark Eden: The Swamp in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* fails to mention even the name of the Great Black Swamp.¹¹ Further, Ann Vileisis' exhaustive tome *Discovering the Unknown Landscape: A History of America's Wetlands* only briefly and generally discusses the swamp's deforestation and road construction.¹² Undoubtedly, the scant attention paid to the swamp is evidence to its almost complete and lasting annihilation from the American memory and landscape. Those who followed Evans through the Black Swamp were less likely to share in his enthusiastic assessment of the value of wild places, and they began in earnest to rub the wet place off the map of Ohio.

The Black Swamp's historic boundaries stretched from the Maumee Bay – in present day Toledo – eastward toward the Sandusky River. Its southwestern limits crossed into Indiana, where it eventually surrendered to higher and drier terrain.

¹¹ David C. Miller's work *Dark Eden* concerns mostly swampland in the South (e.g. Virginia's Dismal Swamp), and it also considers Victorian artistic responses to that landscape.

¹² See *Discovering the Unknown Landscape*. Pgs 60-63.

Sparsely settled by pioneers until the middle of the nineteenth century, the swamp's original range boasted acreage nearly as large as the state of Connecticut. In "The Changing Toledo Region – A Naturalist's Point of View" Harold Mayfield emphasizes its daunting size: "the Black Swamp lay like a moat across the northwest corner of Ohio from lake Erie to Indiana" (85). Although the Black Swamp, like the Florida Everglades, held extensive open marshes and bog lands, its most impressive feature was its seemingly impregnable forest mazed throughout with creeks and sinkholes.¹³

It was this "blue wall" of dense woods and water-soaked soil that protected it from deforestation until the years following the Civil War when draining and agriculture began in earnest.¹⁴ Mayfield describes the ominous origins of the swamp's name and reputation:

The name came originally from the color of the soil, but may have been perpetuated also because of other reports about it. Its reputation was black too. Reports about it were spread widely by returning soldiers [...] in the War of 1812 having chopped and floundered through it, they had seen the country at its worst. They carried vivid memories of water ankle deep in their tents and sticky

¹³ See Jim Mollenkopf's *The Great Black Swamp, Vols. I-III*. In February 2009, Mr. Mollenkopf was kind enough to meet with me and share his considerable knowledge and love for the Black Swamp region of Ohio.

¹⁴ See Mollenkopf's *The Great Black Swamp*. Pgs 83-90.

mud pulling on the legs of horses at every step. [...] The Traveler had to contend not only with the thick and trackless forest, mud, and difficult streams to ford, but in summer also swarms of mosquitoes and with malaria, identified them as “fever and ague.” (84).

As Evans walked closer to the Black Swamp’s border, he decided to travel upon the frozen shoreline of Lake Erie. It was early March when he entered Ohio and though the territory had been granted statehood in 1812, much of its coast had not yet succumbed to the pastoral impulses of the Americans. In an effort to avoid thick undergrowth, Evans ventured out on the ice for ease of walking. Even here, however, removed from the established eastern landscapes of village, farm, and woodlot, Evans impressed his imagination on the scene, enjoying and even reveling in the harsh frozen plains of the lake. His walk westward had led him to a plane of eerie wonder:

It was late in the afternoon when I reached the lake; and it was my intention to travel upon it until evening, and then pass into the woods. Soon after leaving the the river [the Rocky River], however, I found the banks of the Lake very high and steep. I pushed on. This tremendous ridge of perpendicular rock proved several miles in length. I was not aware that it was the celebrated scene of storms, shipwrecks, and savage offerings. Night approached. The prospects around me were sublime. I was upon a glare of ice. Upon one side was a

congealed ocean, apparently unlimited, and on the other a gloomy bank fifty feet in height, entirely perpendicular, and pending from which were huge icicles – I speak within bounds. They were twenty feet in length, and as large as a hogshead. (188)

This passage is not dissimilar from Thoreau's lauded "Ktaadn" sojourn in *The Maine Woods* which describes his solo descent from Mt. Kathadin in 1846, traveling a landscape that appeared nothing like the woods and fields that surrounded Concord. He walked through "burnt lands" that represented the "unhandseled globe" of wild country (59). On Kathadin, Thoreau experienced what Max Oelschlaeger's describes as "the true meaning of the wilderness [...] rooted in the spirit of living nature and the relation of human consciousness to that world, not in human categorization or use in both" (150-151). Evans, too, walked through a boundary land where his conscience seemed divided from a compulsion toward the frozen, unknowable ice, beyond categorization, and the wooded ravine that lead back up to firm land – the *terra cognita* of experience: "Upon one side was a congealed ocean, apparently unlimited, and on the other a gloomy bank fifty feet in height, entirely perpendicular, and pending from which were huge icicles" (188). Moreover, as Evans stepped onto the frozen barge of Lake Erie, he navigated beyond the merely picturesque; here he traversed a peripheral land of dueling consciousness. In *Pilgrims to the Wild*, John P. Grady speaks to Thoreau's use of these

boundaries, one which Evans understood on his ice-walk: "To bring ego consciousness to its very boundary is, in fact, to run the risk of dissolution. We call this 'living on the edge.' Here, the common sense fails: there is no civilization, there is no wild; there is no you, there is no me; there is no mind; there is no body. All is one" (Grady 33). The dangers of walking through the sparsely populated areas of New Hampshire and New York offered no prospect of "dissolution" as tenuous as this northern Ohio ice-field. Out on the ice, the road and forested track gave way to a wild path where walking lost its georgic context. The wasteland offered only "the celebrated scenes of storms, shipwrecks, and savage offerings" (Evans 88). The wilderness shed all abstraction in this realm of "savage offerings," and as Evans' footfalls encountered the false-ground of the lake, he enacted Thoreau's later dictum of "leaving the city more and more, and withdrawing into the wilderness" ("Walking" 19).

When Evans stepped out onto the ice, he confronted true physical danger. The passage attends his alert mindfulness with its use of specific, non-romanticized detail. He writes, "I speak within bounds" (88) – meaning, he presents a straightforward discourse, without art or moralizing. Evans described icicles using the everyday comparison of "hogheads" (casks capable of holding 63 gallons) and the unadorned mathematics of "twenty-feet" (88). The passage is also unique in Evans' use of time compression. When he walked onto the lake, he offered the detail "late afternoon" and

after a few sentences, "Night approached." By middle of the paragraph the short winter day had concluded, and the wildness of night blasted its full strength:

The severity of the weather had been unparalleled. It has rained, -- it had frozen. the night was dark. To ascend the banks impossible: -- they seemed to be the everlasting battlements of nature! The weather was still moderating; the ice of the Lake cracking in every direction, and producing a noise like distant thunder. The solitude of my situation was profound. I was in the midst of world that appeared to have been made but for one man. I walked with caution, hoping yet to meet a ravine in the banks. At length I heard, at little distance, a sullen stream pouring its scanty waters into the hollow lake. I paused -- was bewildered -- was lost. The stars presented a gloomy aspect, and shed ineffectual light. (188)

Unlike Thoreau, who found on Katahdin a nature not created for mankind and one that is perhaps even antithetical to human needs, Evans viewed the scenery as being palpably dangerous yet also somehow purposively created for his individual meditation and even pleasure. For example, instead of encountering Thoreau's "star's surface" and "hard matter" that was "not to be associated with [man]," Evans walked "in the midst of a world [that] appeared to have been made but for one man" (188).

No doubt Evans imagined himself as the “one Adam” made for this landscape. R.W.B. Lewis in his influential text *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* argues that

“[A] radically new personality, the hero of the new adventure” [entered the imagination. [He] was most easily identified with Adam before the fall. Adam was the first, the archetypal man. His moral position was prior to experience, and in his very newness he was fundamentally innocent. The world and history lay all before him. And he was the type of creator, the poet par excellence, creating language himself by naming the elements of the scene about him. (5)

Evans goes on to admit to being lost and without the guiding light from stars which cast a “gloomy aspect, and shed ineffectual light,” but Evans seemed to delight even in his lost and cast-out state. He ends the paragraph not with questions but rather with adulation; buoyed by the spectacle that surrounds him he proclaims, “My situation was truly enviable! – There is a charm in desolation, and in the season of danger, the human soul triumphs in the conviction of its own Indestructibility” (188).

By the end of Evans’ foray onto the ice, he came close to foreshadowing Thoreau’s conclusions as he hiked down Kathadin. Both passages hold spirituality in their words. Thoreau confessed, “I fear not sprits but bodies, of which I am one” (*Maine Woods* 377). Evans, though, remains too much endowed with his Christian convictions

to finish with Thoreau's enigmatic "Who are we?" Where are we?" (*Maine Woods* 377).

Instead, even though Evans' impulse was for a mystical and transcendent, if not quite transcendental, desire, he seemed to view his body as merely a vehicle for the soul won by Christ. Just as one would sail in a vessel, the body transports the soul across the water; perhaps like Jesus whose penultimate belief in the indestructibility of the soul prompted him to admonish Peter the disciple as he sank into Galilee for his lack of faith. Evans, for his part, would not duplicate the apostle's mistake.

After he reached the summit of a bank and climbed out of frozen lake bed, Evans relished his experience on the outlands. That night, he confided, "I did not, however, sleep much: my imagination had become active, and I passed most of the night in a weaving web of fancy" (189). Clearly, Evans became entangled by his confrontation with the solitude of the ice barrens. At no other time in *Pedestrious Tour* does Evans' project this web metaphor of entrapment toward his imagination; his other walking experiences faded and merged, offering few lingering effects.

His "fancy" remained so steadfast that days later, as he walked ever closer to the Black Swamp proper, even his method of travel became more primal. He threw off his moccasins and socks, which he claimed had rotted through, and proceeded to travel the frozen ground barefoot. While less hardy – and sensible, perhaps – walkers value their footwear over rough land, Evans casually recounted his new style:

From this mode of travel I found no inconvenience. At length, however, my feet swelled to an alarming size; but believing that rest alone would remove the evil, and not being willing to afford myself much, I concluded to abandon them to that possible remedy, which this incident to the crisis of disease and the influence of habit. I now traveled with even more industry than before, and in the course of a few days the swelling was entirely reduced: this experience, however, was not very pleasant; especially, after a few hours rest. (191)

Evans' nonchalance and use of understatement remains a constant theme throughout *Pedestrious Tour*. He regarded physical suffering as a kind of minor annoyance that did not hinder or counterbalance the joy of the walk. To showcase his stoicism, Evans paraphrased the roman philosopher Seneca's words, "if our sufferings are not very great we can bear them with firmness; and if they are very great we shall soon be relieved from them by death" (191). He promoted the salubriousness of walking even to the point of incredulous belief when he observed,

I do not remember a moment, during this period, in which I did not possess a balance of pleasure. The solitude which surrounded me, the novelty of my situation, and the interesting prospects which frequently presented themselves, often rendered me very happy. (191)

Evans would have readers believe that he was thoroughly healed from the momentary doubt that he had suffered along the Pennsylvania coast. Nature was no longer “mute” and unaffected; instead it “presented” itself to Evans as a companion along the path.

Evans goes on to tell that “a day or two after adopting my new mode of travel” he encountered “two Indians,” and was able to purchase a new pair of deerskin moccasins to comfort his feet (191). These new shoes would prove vital as Evans entered the marsh fields of the Black Swamp: “Soon after leaving this river I crossed vast prairies, all of which are rich, but some of them are too wet for cultivation. The best of these prairies are from two to three feet deep, consisting of a rich black mold, and having a pan of limestone” (194). Evans was particularly impressed with these prairies and noted with eagerness that the land could someday yield “the most proper series of crops” and that “innumerable cattle may be fed [...] in the summer.” Evans’ penchant for visualizing a future of cultivated fields and proper husbandry denote the remnant tropes of travel literature that had reemerged in his imagination. Thus, on one hand Evans was able to fully praise the landscape’s wild state, yet on the other hand he was still a man of his time, and his civically-trained mind and New England sensibility could not help from perceiving an “improved” space. The swamp, however, was not so easily tamed.

Prior to Evans' walk through Ohio, the Black Swamp had already earned an infamous reputation for inhospitality. Soldiers from the War of 1812 had labeled the land "the home of Satan" and pioneers called it the "great terror" for its perennially wet soil, ancient trees, and summer insect infestations (Mollenkopf *GBS*, 18). For his part, Evans remained undaunted in the crossing. Yet it was in the swamp, that he would suffer his only tragedy. Evans lamented that his dogs, Tyger and Pomp, were killed by a pack of wolves while he night walked through the wet forest. Evans praised the dogs for their loyalty, but did not go on to castigate the wolves for their brutal attack. He simply stated, "they were probably very hungry and ferocious" (196). The ghosts of Evans' dogs, though, never left his thoughts as the walk became a solitary affair: "my lone steps too, through the streams, forcibly reminded me of their absence" (199).

In addition to the wild animals that harassed Evans' march, the swamp itself seemed to thwart every effort to cross it. Intermixed with thawing snow and the lingering frost from a long winter, the Black Swamp became a mire of false footings, overflowing with traps-holes and ice weakening freshets. Evans' travel, at times, seemed more akin with a swimming than walking:

It was in its very worst state. There was an unusual quantity of snow and ice upon the ground; and the weather being moderate the water increased rapidly.

The distance across the swamp is forty miles. The wading was continually deep,

the bushes thick and the surface of the earth frozen with holes. What was worse than all, the ice, not yet separated and nearly strong enough to bear one, was continually breaking and letting the traveler into the water from two to four feet in depth. The creeks there too are numerous, and ice in them was broken up. The freshets were great, the banks of the creeks overflow, and the whole country inundated. (201)

Even though this was the most rugged portion of his trip, he was not the lone swamp traveler. Evans viewed several other walkers with whom he unsuccessfully attempted to find information about the best way “through this trackless wild” (201). The first man Evans observed was an “Indian passing across a neck of land;” however, Evans was ignored by the man and hastily concluded, “he either could not speak English, or pretended this was the case” (201). The next encounter featured Evans meeting with “three Indians” and an intoxicated white man. Apparently, there had been some dispute between the Native Americans and the man because one of them seized Evans’ rifle in an effort to shoot the drunk. After wresting his firearm from the would-be assassins, Evans watched them pursue their white companion into the forest. The perplexing drama concluded with Evans’ detached concern: “I marched on” (201).

The encounters, if they happened at all, augment the peculiar spectacle of the swamp. Here men did not behave in accordance with social norms. Wild lands begat a

wild people. The Indian who ignored Evans sidestepped an understood walker's code, at least in the East, to aid fellow travelers. The pedestrian Evans misunderstands, however, what the writer Evans may not. The pedestrian Evans off-handedly believes that the Indian likely "could not speak English" or perhaps merely feigned ignorance. This implication, though, is that the system of etiquette had devolved in this wilderness, far from the rule of law. Likewise, the incident between Indians and the drunken white man promoted the concept that the swamp produced indolence, violence and even, perhaps, madness. Evans himself does not brood on the topic; however, as he allows readers interpret the scene and draw their own conclusions about the men's behaviors. The irony resides in the complexity between Evans' desire to flee from society and the entrapments of decorum and what he actually encounters in the interior. On one hand he revels in the "works of creation" and the freedom of the road, but on the other hand there still remains, if only implied, the hard-lost fear of barbarism so long conditioned in the American milieu. Roderick Nash explains: "[...] the complete license of the wilderness was an overdose. Morality and social order seemed to stop at the edge of the clearing. Given the absence of restraint, might not the pioneer succumb to what [Puritan missionary] John Eliot called 'wilderness-temptations' "(29). Even the natives in the scene do not appear to belong with any established tribal order. Just like the drunken white man, they are viewed as renegades hiding out in the swamp.

The previous scene of human debasement shares compelling proximity with Evans' highest estimation of wild country found within the entire text of *Pedestrious Tour*. The three word sentence "I marched on" is the solitary line that divides the bizarre human episode of the natives and the white with a paradigm shifting assessment of American wilderness. The walk, the journey, the march of the individual acts a fulcrum between the fleeing drunk and the pure, almost prelapsarian wilderness of the following revelation. The solitude of the Black Swamp night had razed all thought of the days' assemblage:

Towards evening I found a small elevation of land and there encamped for the night. My little fire appeared like a star on the bosom of the ocean. Earth was my couch, and my covering the brilliant canopy of heaven. After preparing my supper, I slept in peace; but was awakened, at day-light, a high wind accompanied by rain. Ere I arose, the lofty trees shaken by the tempest seemed ready to fall upon me. During the evening, such was the stilling of the situation, and such the slender of the firmament, that nothing but fatigue could have checked the current of reflection. How great the advantages of Solitude! – how sublime is the silence of nature's ever active energies! There is something in the very name of wilderness, which charms the ear, and soothes the soul of man. There is a religion in it. – the children of Israel were in the wilderness, and it was

a type of this world! They sought too the Land of Promise, and this was a type of Heaven. (202)

This passage is not remarkable in the extent that it praises wilderness; its language is certainly vigorous and conforms to the conventions of sublime that were readily apparent in the Niagara scene. However, Evans' electric prose does highlight a shift in aesthetics and emotional response because his homage to the wild issues forth from the least picturesque of landscapes – the Great Black Swamp. Long after mountains, rushing torrents, and rural farm scenes had been categorized and defended as either sublime or picturesque or in a harmony of both, wetlands still held the dubious distinction as “desert places” and “horrid abodes.” The word “swamp” even claims an American origin, and for many years, settlers used the words “swamp” and “dismal” interchangeably too denote land that was of no use (Vileisis 33).

Evans begins with an unmistakable allusion to resurrection and rebirth. He encamped on a “small elevation of land” that provided practical dryness from the swampy soil yet also became a type of altar to the wilderness. He slept at peace in the swamp. Consider William Cullen Bryant's “Thanatopsis” (1811, 1821) against Evans' own words:

By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave,
 Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
 About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams. (79-81)

Evans replied back, "Earth was my couch and my covering the brilliant canopy of heaven" (202). Contrasted against the stillness of the night, the morning brings a "tempest," and Evans "arose" to find the scene holy. In a refutation of the picturesque, he does not detail the scene before him; instead, his tempered words foment the wildness of the place instead of its beauty. The swamp has evoked the polite equivalent of Whitman's "barbaric yawp" from Evans.

Thoreau observed, "Generally speaking, a howling wilderness does not howl: it is the imagination of the traveler does the howling" (*Maine Woods* 463). Indeed, other Black Swamp travelers had heard the howl, too, though in decidedly different tones than Evans. One typical response described the swamp as a "forsaken, desolate wilderness." Evans' contrasting view that the "[land] was a type of heaven" was too far beyond the common held belief of wetlands as wasteland, neither beautiful nor healthy. The most customary emotional reply that others felt for the space was loathing.

Evans ends by alluding to the "children of Israel" and to the established biblical connotations of wild nature. Evans, steeped in New England religious tradition, played with the interpretations of this biblical wilderness reemerged in America. Ever since the

Puritan captivity narratives, writers have made connections between “The children of Israel” and the new children of America (European-settlers). Evans, for his part, turns the tradition on its head. According to Evans, the wanderers traveled through wilderness in the search for “the Land of Promise.” However, this “Land of Promise” that they inherited remained identical to the terrain in which the people had just passed through. As a kind of cosmic joke and cautionary tale, the people of Israel, and in a very real sense the people of America, were in danger of defiling the very heaven on earth that presented itself. To Evans, the promised-land was not found only in some future state, but it was also thriving now in the presence of God’s country and the solitude of the swamp. Evans’ positive and religious inclinations toward the wilderness would perform well for him during his remaining days in the swamp as the ground gave way to water.

Evans did not walk as much through the latter half of the Black Swamp as he was forced to swim through it. He reports how “I found it necessary to wade through water of the depth of four or five feet, and my clothes were covered in icicles” (202). Later his circumstances grew dire: “Alone, nearly up to my neck water [...] my situation was rather unpleasant; the novelty of it; however, together with my apparent inability to extricate myself produced a resource-less smile” (203). Further on, Evans “fell in with about twenty Indians of the Wyandot [Huron] tribe” (203). It is noteworthy that these

natives, who were members of a “tribe” and chanced upon after his wilderness epiphany, did not behave like the initial people Evans met in the swamp. Even though “their condition was deplorable,” they allowed Evans to camp with them, and they offered hospitality providing “some strips of bark [...] prepared to keep [him] from the ground” (204). That night Evans even philosophized with one of the troupe: “My friend called himself Will Siscomb; and with him I conversed respecting the Great Spirit” (204). It seems that after Evans’ reflection on wildness in the Black Swamp, the people dwelling there became more gracious. But this civility was not a facade of pomp and comportment; instead the “tawny group” displayed a wilderness authenticity, one that produced a generosity and mutual understanding (204).

Early the next morning, Evans left the company of natives and walked on. He arrived at Fort Miegs, an outpost that was besieged during the War of 1812, on the western boundary of the Black Swamp. He stayed only long enough for supply, and then he turned northward toward the Michigan territory. As Evans traveled north, the road opened up and bore the characteristics of western engineering:

I entered the Military Road [...] and which leads to the old roads in the vicinity of Detroit. This road is cut through a perfect wilderness of a large growth of timber. It is wide and entirely free from stumps [...] the traveling of this road is

[...] very heavy, and a person on foot is much annoyed by the sharp points of bushes which are concealed in the mud. (209)

By the time Evans reached Detroit, he had walked over 1000 miles. The lands that he traversed encompassed the pastoral and the wild, the sublime and the unknowable.

Upon his entrance into the capital, he addressed a note to the Governor of Michigan: “A gentleman from New Hampshire wishes for the privilege of introducing himself to Governor Cass. He is upon a pedestrious tour, and therefore trusts, that the roughness of his garb will not preclude him from the honor of an interview. March 20th, 1818”

(216). Needless to say, the governor met with Evans. The walker described him as a man of “unaffected friendliness and manner, which so well comports with the institution of the country” (216). No record survives, however, about the governor’s opinion of Evans, the intrepid pedestrian, but as a New Englander himself, governor Cass may well have been proud of this walker who braved the wilds of the north.

2.1 The Drained Sublime: Evans and the Legacy of the Black Swamp

“Idaho is full of elk. Ohio isn’t. The reason is obvious.” – Dave Foreman and Howie

Wolke, The Big Outside

The Great Black Swamp has all but been erased from Ohio’s landscape. In the latter half of the nineteenth century the swamp was dredged and drained, not only to open acreage for agriculture and grazing but also to combat deadly infestations of

mosquitoes that plagued the early townships with disease. Jim Mollenkopf, a local Toledo historian, who has written six books on northern Ohio's history, explains how settlers drained the swamp first using the rough method of shovels and picks. This technique proved satisfactory when draining surface water off an individual farm lot; however, there was no systematic method for displacing the deep ground water that lay trapped above the swamp's life source – dense clay soil. In response, the state government intervened in order to expedite the draining projects:

Prompted by this need [of dry land] and the cholera outbreaks of the 1850's, which was frequently spread through contaminated water, the first in a series of 'ditch laws' was passed in 1859. These gave county officials the right to enter and, if necessary, seize land for the purpose of ditch projects that were in the public interest [...]. The first under drains were crude, often consisting of saplings or stones laid in a trench and covered over, drains which deteriorated rather quickly. A longer lasting method was developed which was to nail two planks together in the shape of a 'V' which was later inverted in a trench and then covered. (*The Great Black Swamp II* 61)

Eventually these under-drains were lined with clay tiles – dug from the Black Swamp's own basin – and in a matter of decades the swamp was transmuted from the biologically diverse and ancient forest that delighted Evans, into a landscape that

appears more like the mid-western prairies of Iowa and Illinois – the corn belt of America.

Invariably as the Black Swamp lost ground to increasing populations of farmers, the wildlife that had inhabited its marshes and forests also faded. The first to abandon the swamp were the large grazing animals that fed on wet grasslands surrounding the forests; next in secession were the apex predators that had already been eradicated from most of the eastern United States. In the appendix to *The Marshes of Southwestern Lake Erie*, Louis W. Campbell catalogs Harold Mayfield's list and dates of mammalian flight from Black Swamp territory. The inventory offers a glimpse into the irrevocable impact upon wildlife that that drainage mandates produced. Like so many other "improved" areas, the animals were simply not compatible with ever-expanding development:

bison 1812	gray wolf 1860
elk 1822	black bear 1860
beaver 1837	bob cat 1878
wolverine 1842	porcupine 1874
panther 1845	deer 1889
lynx 1848	otter 1900 (179)

Evans was impressed with the number of deer living throughout the swamp.

Surprisingly, the first deer that Evans viewed from New Hampshire westward were

found in northern Ohio. This detail testifies to the effects of settlement in the East. According to Evans the swamp deer were quite large, “weigh[ing] from 150 to 200 pounds” (195). Sustaining himself mostly on squirrel and partridges throughout his walk, Evans was eager to hunt deer. This enthusiasm was soon diminished, however, by what he observed as their childlike nature: “I had never seen a wild deer before, and they appeared too innocent for death. I was only half disposed to shoot them” (1912). Evans it seems was more a walker than a hunter, and he later confides that it was his dogs (days later killed by wolves) that “brought one of these guileless animals to the earth” (191). He fed on it without pleasure. The deer that disappeared from the Black Swamp in 1889 have returned in force; however, not enough of the original forest endures to support a return of larger predators such bear and cougars.

The largest remnants of the Black Swamp are scattered throughout national wildlife refuges and state and city parks along Ohio’s northern coast. The remaining tracts linger as a living memorial to the once considerable swamp. Now, instead expanses of wetlands, the forest service and municipalities have wrangled the wilderness into parks and places that ostensibly seem wild and unaffected yet are in actuality quite tame. The city of Toledo must be commended for its impressive array of parks and open spaces that surround it, but when one considers the original scope of the swamp and how an entire ecosystem was collapsed it gives pause. Consider if the

Florida Everglades, Marjory Stoneman Douglas' land of "vast glittering openness, wider than the enormous visible round horizon [...] under the dazzling blue heights of space" were constrained to Miami city parks or if the large marsh-fields of Georgia's Okefenokee had been cleared for rice and cotton (5). In "Walking" Thoreau expressed that "a town is saved, not more by the righteous men in it than by the woods and swamp that surround it" (40). Though Toledo is rightly saved because at least there are fragments of the forest encircling the city, the fields of northern Ohio are silent witness to the forgotten land. In truth, walking the vestiges of the Black Swamp is both invigorating and sad.

The two finest plots to walk in Black Swamp country are Pearson Park, located in the Toledo suburb of Oregon, and The Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge. Both parks include landscapes that Evans would have encountered and each provides unique Black Swamp experiences.

Pearson Park, managed by Toledo Metroparks, offers the most impressive fragment of how the swamp woodland must have appeared when Evans walked through. Dedicated in 1934, the park derives its name from a Toledo local named George W. Pearson who championed its protection. The reasons that the lot was not originally logged remains obscure; however before its park status, the area was "known as the Banks Lands because the property was often mortgaged and held by local banks

as collateral” (Mollenkopf, *Woods and Wanders* 26). Currently, Pearson Park is a 320 acre commons that appears like a dark swatch of timber mired against a heavily suburbanized East Toledo. Highway 2 parallels its southern border and by turning and taking three lefts, first on South Wynn and then onto Starr Rd., and finally onto South Lallendorf, a driver can circumnavigate the entire area in five minutes. A jogging track loops around the outer edge of the park; it sees heavy use even in winter. It is strange to watch runners circle the enclosed wetlands, moving like second hands on a clock around the timeless looking sycamores and bur oaks. Driving along Highway 2, I peered into the woods (no longer a forest) and had a fleeting view of how impressive, and even foreboding, the swamp must have been to Evans. The trees huddle close and seem to squeeze out the sunlight, so that even in winter, a walker can take ten paces into the woods and lose sight of the busy highway.

On Toledo metropark’s webpage for Pearson, the city manager’s language is remarkable in its appeal to the pleasant nature of the preserve:

Pearson is one of the last remaining stands of the Great Black Swamp, a *notorious* forest so dense that development of northwest Ohio lagged 100 years behind the rest of the state. Soldiers in the War of 1812 sent home letters describing the swamp as a *miserable* stretch of water, mud and mosquitoes. Today, the Metro

park is a much *friendlier* place where purple cress, spring beauties, trillium, wild ginger and wild geranium bloom in spring. (my italics)

The park service works hard to keep Pearson so friendly. Without constant attention and maintenance, the land would quickly revert to its primal state.

Even though I accepted that the Great Black Swamp was no longer exceedingly *great* and that the dark depths of the forest had mostly been expunged, I still expected to at least feel the wild as I entered through its gates. But upon entering the park, I immediately realized the error in such thinking: signs that post the speed limit, a “sledding hill,” and even a winter “warming hut” all provide a civility and subtle quaintness to the park that diminishes any sense of a “horrid swamp.” When I visited in February, patches of snow covered the land and the park grounds were full of people walking their dogs or stretching out for a run around its perimeter. Park lovers in Toledo possess a tenuous ardor toward the swamp. Because of its highly controlled and managed state, the authentic, hidden swamp is kept at bay, and the Maumee River is held in its banks. In this way, people can grow to love the former “terror” so long as it does not infringe on recreation and agriculture. The Great Black Swamp has been robbed of even its nomenclature; nothing about Pearson Park insights fear, provided one’s valuables are safety locked in the car’s trunk!

About fifteen miles east of Pearson Park sprawls one of the finest intact wetlands in northern Ohio – The Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Ottawa NWR represents the largest expanse of the Black Swamp. Bordering Lake Erie and comprised of over nine thousand acres, Ottawa NWR boasts some of the best habitats for water fowl in the eastern United States. The refuge consists of expansive marsh plains interconnected by flood levees and fractured by mixed hard wood forests and bogs.

When I pulled into the parking area, on President's day, I was delighted to be the first visitor. I would, I hoped, have the place all to myself. The thermostat indicated that it was 29 degrees, and the wind had begun to blow in from the west. Even though the majority of Ottawa consists of wetlands, walking in the refuge is undemanding because the wildlife service has built causeways throughout that keep visitors on a raised brim above the marsh. The levee's primary duty, however, is to protect the fragile refuge from the lake storms and erosion.

The first two miles of my walk were uneventful. Canada geese floated on a distant pond; sparrows darted between the black cherry trees. But after about an hour of walking among the frozen marshes and flocks of Canada geese, I committed two sins of a pedestrian: I trespassed and then became hopelessly lost.

As I walked up to a split in the trail, a place where one of the causeways turned abruptly to the right and another headed off into a dark wood, I noticed two signs

posted on a sawhorse blocking the path. The first read in unambiguous language: "The Following Trail is Closed, Bald Eagle Nesting Area." To its right another sign cautioned: "Bald Eagles are protected by the Endangered Species Act." I should have turned right and stayed on the levee, watching the geese and tundra swans honk in their frozen nests. But the temptation to walk into the forest and potentially see bald eagles was just too compelling. I placed my right foot beyond the sign.

For the next three hours I walked a circuitous route in and out of woodlots, now an icy fen, next a spring-feed bog. I grew colder with each step and experienced, at least on a contemporary scale, the wondrous secret America that stretched out before Evans in 1818:

For several days I have been employed in crossing vast prairies. The weather continued to moderate, the snow, water and mud were deep, and wading laborious. I frequently met with considerable freshets, and the banks of the creeks were over flown. Here I saw vast flocks of wild geese flying towards Sandusky Bay. Their horse [sic] notes, proceeding from the misty air, rendered even more solitary a trackless and almost illimitable plain of course grass. I was repeatedly lost in these prairies, and found it necessary to calculate my way by compass and map. (195-196)

Without either a compass or a map, I was fortunate enough, after tramping around until dusk, to run into a muskrat trapper, three miles beyond the refuge's boundary. He kindly pointed the most direct route back to the parking lot and promised not to tell the wildlife service about my disregard for its policy. When I reached my car, the sun had set. And it was then, amid the gathering darkness, that the Black Swamp regained its former vastness. No longer partitioned by park signage or even levees, something very ancient and very still returned to the land. Jack Turner describes this unveiling in *The Abstract Wild*:

The easiest way to experience a bit of what the wild was like is to go into a great forest at night alone. Sit quietly for awhile. Something very old will return [...]
Alone in the natural world, time is less dense, less filled with information; space is close; smell and hearing and touch reassert themselves (26-27).

It was in this zone of "less dense" time that I could capture the sentiment Evans felt when he looked up from the swamp's density and exulted in its mysterious silence.

Evans' arrival in Michigan did not end his wanderings throughout the changing landscapes of the United States. He still had nearly 3000 miles in front of him. However, he would not witness another terrain quite like the quagmire of the Black Swamp nor would he record another such emotional response to wilderness.

In this chapter, I have attempted to resuscitate some interest in Evans' position as both a walker and writer. First and foremost his extreme pedestrianism certainly merits respect. While many romantic tourists were content to walk the Hudson River Valley, and peer in the chasm of Niagara Falls, Evans took steps beyond the fashions and plunged, if only for a time, into the wild interior. Also, Evans must be applauded for his singular response to the now forgotten Black Swamp. His unlikely attitude toward the rugged road of the swamp was one not duplicated by those who came after him, and his praise of the wetlands was years before its time. Invariably, Evans did not call for the Black Swamp to be protected or saved as a gem of wild America, and to place this onus on him is as unrealistic as it is unfair. What Evans' tribute did accomplish though was to initiate a shift in attitude, a step toward a greater appreciation of the natural "solitudes" that expanded the continent. By walking the land and coming into contact with the actual earth, Evans experienced firsthand the wonders of America, and became, in his own eccentric way, one of the forefathers of American walking.

3 JOHN D. GODMAN: THE WISSAHICKON WALKER

Estwick Evans' travel through New England and the Great Lakes region in 1817 marked him as one of the first Euro-Americans who pleasure-walked great distances in an effort to witness and experience the country's hinterlands. Evans' walk was a circumscribed, westward journey from what he considered the civilized East into the sublime interior of America. As I previously discussed, Evans' journey and subsequent text, *Pedestrious Tour*, epitomized and enlarged the burgeoning genre of travel writing in the early nineteenth century. Even though travel writing proved popular among romantic-minded readers, it was not the only form of pedestrian literature gaining traction in the early to mid century. In 1833, Dr. John Davidson Godman's slender volume *Rambles of a Naturalist* was published as a posthumous homage to Godman's life and love of nature and walking.¹⁵ *Rambles* presented a form of pedestrianism and seeing that tempered the romantic impulses of Evans for scientific curiosity, and it replaced the linear, determined walk cross country with a more circular, investigatory ramble – akin to Thoreau's later "Excursions" – through Godman's own known place.

¹⁵Godman's serial publication predates Susan F. Cooper by twenty years and Thoreau by twenty-five. While no evidence survives that Thoreau was reading Godman, Godman was certainly informed by those who also influenced Thoreau: William Bartram and Gilbert White most notably.

Initially printed in 1830 as twelve separate essays in a Philadelphia Quaker weekly journal entitled *Friend*, this work represented a shift from fashionable romanticized views of nature and walking. *Rambles* serves as a prototype of the American natural history essay that would later be typified by the likes of Susan Fenimore Cooper and Thoreau; it is a text that displays the speaker walking out into nature with a sharp eye for the subtleties of landscape and a scientific appreciation for local flora and fauna that had hitherto been lacking from travel accounts. It was this originality of scope that leads Lawrence Buell to conclude that Godman was “the first American to produce a nonspecialized book of environmental essays” (399). In addition, Godman’s work was one of the earliest American manifestations of the “ramble,” a sub-genre often accredited with emergence in the Englishman Gilbert White’s *A Natural History of Selbounre County* (1778). Typically, rambles showcase naturalists walking along localized tracts as they observe and ruminate on very personal and ostensibly familiar landscapes. It is in these rambles through everyday terrains that Godman carves out his contribution to walking literature.

Although John D. Godman’s reputation has fallen into obscurity throughout much of the last century, during his life he was a highly respected physician and professor of anatomy who was a member of both the American Philosophical Society and the Franklin Institute. His death from tuberculosis in 1830 at the young age of

thirty-six cut short a career that compelled one biographer, Dr. Thomas Sewall, to lament had he survived “he might have shone as the poet of nature, not less than her historian, where nothing but observation is requisite [...] (qtd. Rosen 173).

Because of his obscurity today, a brief account of his life will further contextualize Godman and his work. Born in Annapolis, Maryland, in 1794, Godman was orphaned at an early age and was raised by an aunt in Wilmington, Delaware, and Chestertown, Maryland.¹⁶ After the death of his aunt, Godman became an apprentice printer in Baltimore, and in 1814 he served on a navy flotilla stationed at Fort McHenry, during the barrage made famous by Francis Scott Key. Godman’s interest in medicine compelled him to correspond and later become mentored by Dr. Lucky, an instructor at the University of Maryland. Soon after the war, Godman began his medical training in earnest: “he pursued his studies with such diligence and zeal as to furnish [...] strong intimations of his future immense. [...]. [H]e pressed forward with an energy and perseverance that enabled him not only to rival, but to surpass all of his fellows” (*Rambles* 12).

Godman graduated from the University of Maryland in 1818 and took up residence in Anne Arundel County, bordering the Chesapeake Bay south of Baltimore.

¹⁶The most thorough study of Godman’s life is Susan A.C. Rosen’s account, found in the important *Early American Nature Writers* (2008), edited by Daniel Patterson. This timely edition gives biographical and scholarly attention to many neglected nineteenth century authors.

His time spent laboring as a provincial doctor would later figure prominently in *Rambles*. Godman returned to Baltimore and subsequently to Philadelphia after two years in Anne Arundel hoping to establish a career as a university lecturer. While in Philadelphia, he met and married Angelica Kauffman Peale, the daughter of artist Rembrandt Peale and granddaughter to W.C. Peale, known for Peale's Museum of Natural History in Philadelphia. Soon after his marriage, Godman was offered an appointment to fill the chair of surgery at the Medical College of Ohio in Cincinnati. Godman's tenure in Cincinnati lasted only one year (the fledging school closed), and the physician returned to Philadelphia, where he soon began work on his most ambitious product – *American Natural History* (1826-1828).

The three volume tome cataloged American mammals – the third volume centers primarily on whales – with an emphasis on anatomy and habitation. Thomas J. Lyon notes that Godman's work, "despite its emphasis on anatomy [...] is in a good part a philosophical text and may be seen as an important American continuation of the line established in England by John Ray." (64). In addition, Lyon views *Natural History* as "a careful and responsible work [which] promotes the scientific approach – as opposed to folklore and prejudice – and displays an objective view toward predation. This enlightened view places Godman about a century ahead of his time" (168). While writing *Natural History*, Godman was still well enough to practice his daily walks and

observations. Had Godman confined himself to the scholarly and indoor venture of rifling through previously published natural histories and journals, his first volume would have, according to Godman himself, been completed with greater expediency. Godman, however, defended his slow, first-hand methodology for publishing an almanac of American mammalia:

To account for the delay which has inevitably occurred in the preparation of this work, it may be sufficient to state that it has been frequently necessary to suspend it for weeks and months, in order to procure certain animals, to observe their habits in captivity, or to make daily visits to the woods and fields for the sake of witnessing their actions in a state of nature. (*American Nature History* V)

Godman refused to publish a work that was not authentic to personal experience and in this effort his surgical training suited him well. Devoted to developing a personal relationship with mid-Atlantic fauna, Godman confessed to “walking many hundred miles [...] [when] investigating the habits of the shew mole” (*Rambles* 15).

During and between Godman’s subsequent volumes of *Natural History*, his tuberculosis progressed, and it was suggested that he spend time in the West Indies to stave off further degeneration. The landscapes of the islands also impressed Godman and feature in several of his *Rambles*. Unfortunately, the islands offered no panacea for his ailment, and within a year he was resigned to the terminal nature of his condition.

He returned once again to Philadelphia. Godman took up residence in Germantown, and it was from here that he began to construct the epistles of walking, locality, and memory that would later be collected as *Rambles of a Naturalist*. John D. Godman died on April 17, 1830, never knowing that his thin volume of letters would help establish a new genre. *Rambles* prefigures future walking texts that claim that the most exotic of trails are the ones which trace through local spaces and that an understanding of place is just as paramount as an yearning for wilderness.

Rambles is organized around twelve short essays, each consisting roughly of seven pages. The first four sketches focus on the semi-wild land of Germantown, including the famed Wissahickon Creek. Godman titles his essays using Roman numerals, and for the middle essays, “No. V” through “No. IX,” he lets his memory return to the shores of the Chesapeake Bay in Anne Arundel County and also to the Caribbean Islands.

Essays ten through twelve find Godman at his least pedestrian. Here, too, Godman lacks – in contemporary parlance – an “environmental” sensibility. These final three selections contemplate the destructive nature of crows to agriculture and the most effective way of destroying their rookeries. Though lacking a twenty-first century attitude toward to crow populations, the essays do not necessarily detract from Godman’s love of nature; instead, the texts merely reveal a pragmatic side: Godman

was interested in presenting himself as one who possessed utilitarian sensibility, as one concerned with agrarian precepts, and overall as one who contributed to his community.¹⁷ Godman was a man of his time and a writer creating before the cusp of transcendental influence, so his attitudes toward crows was not atypical. To judge his attitudes and actions from a twenty-first century lens seems inequitable. Even though Godman does take part in the hunting of crows, he cannot help from conceding that the birds “contribute in a small degree to the good of the district they frequent” (110).

Due to the lack of actual walking in the latter half of *Rambles*, I will primarily focus on Godman’s earlier letters, particularly essays one through four. It was here, among the country lanes and gentle creeks, that Godman – ever the religious seeker – most “admire[d] the all-perfect designs of awful Author of nature” (63).

3.1 The Keen-Edged Scythe: Walks in Germantown

Contemporary author Wendell Berry exemplifies Godman’s text and perhaps the entire genre of the ramble in his poem “Traveling at Home.” Berry is an heir apparent to Godman’s mode of walking, and he has long championed the local over the global, an experienced landscape to a superficial one:

¹⁷William Buckley Smith’s dissertation, “Literary Natural History in Pre-Darwin America” (U of Penn, 2004), is one of the most recent studies of Godman’s work. Smith’s chapter on Godman argues that his work “privileged science and unity” while helping to construct a “proto-ecological sensibly” in Pre-Darwinian natural history essays.

Even in a country you know by heart
 It's hard to go the same way twice.
 The life of the going changes,
 The chances change and make a new way.
 Any tree or stone or bird
 Can be the bud of a new direction. The
 Natural correction is to make intent
 Of accident. To get back before dark
 is the art of going. (lines 1-9, 115)

Godman's walks serve as a way for the author "to get back before dark," and readers initially coming to Godman must remain cognizant that at the time he was writing selections for *Friend* his condition was terminal. Needless to say, the walks portrayed within the pages of *Rambles* are walks of memory and nostalgia. Instead of preparing his professional legacy by retooling anatomy lectures or personal letters, Godman, lauded physician and professor, spent his final days writing about walking and working through the grammar of his experiences with nature. Berry's paradoxical lines "the natural correction is to make intent / of accident" inform Godman's own struggle with disease and stunted success. He corrects his own fate by turning his attention

toward nature, and he attempts to cast off his years – or illness – as he trudges bodily and mentally through a known place.

The opening lines of *Rambles* “No. I” provide a glimpse into Godman’s daily work, habits of pedestrianism that strongly prefigure Thoreau’s own dictum: “For many years I was self-appointed inspector of snow storms and rain storms, and did my duty faithfully; surveyor, if not of highways, then of forest paths all across-lot routes [...] (*Walden* 33). Godman’s standing as an “inspector” of Germantown’s lanes and creeks seems, like Thoreau, entirely self-prescribed and a product of an insatiable curiosity to understand the world:

From my early youth devoted to the study of nature, it has always been my habit to embrace every opportunity of increasing my knowledge and pleasures by actual observation, and have ever found ample means of gratifying this disposition wherever my place has been allotted by Providence. When an inhabitant of the country it was sufficient to go a few steps from the door, to be in the midst of numerous interesting objects; when a resident of the crowded city a healthful walk of half an hour placed me where my favorite enjoyment was offered in abundance; and now when no longer able to seek in fields and woods and running streams for that knowledge which cannot readily be elsewhere obtained, the recollections of my former ramble is productive of a satisfaction

which past pleasures seldom bestow (Godman 39).

Godman's tone throughout *Rambles* has been observed as "avuncular" and familiar.¹⁸ He undoubtedly holds a friendly conversation with his audience – every essay in *Rambles* concludes with the terse, yet household tag word "John." There are shades, however, of deep nostalgia, and even melancholy that thread throughout the text. Take for instance, the final line of letter "No. I"'s opening paragraph. In a complicated sentence Godman confesses his love of walking among both country and city landscapes. Nowhere was unfamiliar to him. Through two prepositional phrases, he offers parallel memories – "when an inhabitant of the country" and again "when a resident of the crowded city." Both statements look to past ventures, past walks. In the sentence's closing words, after the semi-colon's hard pause, Godman reflects on his dire condition: "and now, when no longer able to seek in fields and woods and running streams for that knowledge which cannot be readily elsewhere obtained, the recollection of my former rambles is productive of a satisfaction which past pleasures but seldom bestow" (39). Writing may be a poor substitute for actual walking and experiencing the elemental trifecta of "fields and woods and running streams," but these memories do seem to mitigate his invalid days at least to some degree, more than any other "past pleasure."

¹⁸Ibid. Pg 142

Godman's reasons for writing about walking were twofold. First, he desired to share an intense personal love with his audience while providing the diligent methodology that had produced his *American Natural History* series:

Perhaps a statement of the manner in which my studies were pursued, may prove interesting to those who love the works of nature, and not be aware how great a field for original observation is within their reach, or how vast a variety of instructive objects are easily accessible, even to occupant of a bustling metropolis. (40)

His second cause for writing *Rambles* involves a gentle didactic agenda. He sought to instruct the reading public about nature's hidden wonders; he was interested in what Thoreau would term in his 1851 Journal the "divine features" of nature (207). Thoreau himself complimented Godman's earlier charge of seeking the unforeseen wild when he wrote, "My profession is to be always on the alert to find God in nature – to know his lurking parts. To attend all the oratorios – the operas in nature" (207). Thus, on some level, *Rambles* works to bring nature inward, to the living places of those who dwell in the city but remain alienated from its imminent, spiritual wonder. Godman tells that nature is not out *there*, in the far Alleghenies and beyond, but instead it functions as palatable aspect of our daily lives if we choose to walk out into its presence.

In addition the spirituality, or God, that Godman finds in the natural world differs from the awful and sublime god of Niagara that had been so readily revealed to nineteenth century readers. By contrast, Godman worships the deity of quiet places, the God of shrews and snails. He envisions a Power who walks the garden in the cool of the day, creating "all-perfect designs" to be admired (63).

Essay "No 1" provides a template for Godman's first four walks. It follows him on journeys down "ordinary streets" and along a creek side in search of those furtive yet common animals created by, what he terms, "the Author of life" (63). Godman's interest in the commonplace remains intriguing because it is through his ramblings that he comes to know these denizens. Godman confessed, though, that on some days he was unable to observe his quarry. This persistence of walking over the same ground and Godman's attitude of "I hope soon to become acquainted," eventually grants rewards (44-45). As a result, *Rambles* becomes one of the first American works to catalogue the virtue and beauty of such "mean" animals as shrew-moles, water spiders, crayfish, salamanders, muskrats, mollusks, deer mice, bluefish, and crabs. For example, the shell of a fresh water mussel is enough to "excite admiration and gratify our curiosity" in his mind (53). The loveliness of such seemingly insignificant beings further produces philosophical inquiry about the fabric of creation. Holding up a mussel, he asks

Why so much elaborateness of construction and such exquisite ornament as are common to most of these creatures, should be bestowed? Destined to pass their lives in and under the mud, possessed of no sense that we are acquainted with, except that of touch, what purpose can ornament serve them? (53)

Writing thirty years before Charles Darwin's paradigm shifting *The Origin of Species* (1859), Godman had neither language nor precedent from which to challenge his own questions. As a result, he ends his mediation on the mussel's shell with a rather typical pre-Darwinian conclusion: "[No one can] form a satisfactory idea of the object the great Author of nature had in view, in thus profusely beautifying creatures occupying so low a place in the scale of creation" (53-54). For Godman it is enough that God holds the mystery and remains sovereign. Thoroughly entrenched in the *scala naturae* tradition, Godman placed his trust in the immutable "Great Chain of Being." His vocation, then, is not to find discernable answers to ponderings but to merely "wander[] slowly along borders of the runs, towards a little wood" and allow his attention to dart from creation to creation, trusting his legs and well as the ubiquitous "Author of nature" to reveal His design. As Michael George Buckley observes, "Godman's vision of the well-wrought cosmos contains two components: one which takes care of humanity and one which expresses order and divine magnificence" (140).

It is this cosmic double-vision which informs every step through Germantown's countryside.

One melding between Godman's walking and his keen-eyed acumen readily appears in the opening lines of essay "No. II." This account dovetails into his previous jaunt by picking up where the latter concluded – Godman returns to the same ground as the day before, hoping to catch sight of an ever-elusive shrew. What follows is Godman at his most lyrical and mystical. He begins with the well-worn symbol of dawn unfolding before his footsteps, yet he remains aware of a common criticism leveled at naturalists – male lovers of domestic nature were often viewed with suspicion. In some circles, they were seen as emasculated and without masculine ambition:¹⁹

On the day following my first related excursion, I started early in the morning and was rewarded by one sight, which could not otherwise have been obtained, well worth the sacrifice of an hour or two of sleep. There may be persons who will smile contemptuously at the idea of a *man's* [Godman's italics] being delighted with such trifles; nevertheless, we are not inclined to envy such as disesteem the pure gratification afforded by these simple and easily accessible pleasures. (46)

¹⁹ See Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. Pgs 51-92.

Godman, indefatigable in his pursuits, causally silences those “persons who will smile contemptuously at the idea of a *man’s* being delighted with such trifles” by walking beyond the voices of mockers into the still fresh morning (46). Because his walks were more akin to vigils, spiritual as well as scientific ventures, he suffered little from critical vitriol. In the following images he moves away from public opinion and into the realm of private rapture:

As I crossed an open lot on my way to the lane, a succession of gossamer spider-webs, lightly suspended from various weeds and small shrubs, attracted my attention. The dew which had formed during the night was condensed upon this delicate lace, in globules of most resplendent brilliance, whose clear luster pleased while it dazzled the sight. In comparison with the immaculate purity of these dew- drops, which reflected and refracted the morning light in beautiful rays, as the gossamer webs trembled in the breeze, how poor would appear the most invaluable diamonds that were ever obtained from Golconda or Brazil! How rich would any monarch be that could boast the possession of one such, as here glittered in thousands on every herb and spray! (46)

Following this lyrical infusion that heightens with phrases such as “resplendent brilliance” and “immaculate purity” and then reaches a crescendo with allusions to exotic riches, Godman provides a natural ethic that clearly foreshadows John Muir’s

environmental observation that “if we tug on anything we find it attached to everything else:”²⁰

They are exhaled in an hour or two, and lost; yet they are almost daily offered to the delighted contemplation of the real lover of nature, who is ever happy to witness the beneficence of the great Creator, not less displayed in trivial circumstances, than in the most wonderful of His works. (46-47)

I am not suggesting that Godman was quite equipped for a fully realized Muirian attitude toward nature; however, the latter passage heralds a sensibility that would manifest and emerge in the last half of the nineteenth century – proper appreciation for nature can advance the culture and intellect of Americans.²¹

The impression of “dew-drops” and “gossamer webs,” just as the intricate markings on the mollusk’s shell, command worth for the seemingly “trivial” elements of the world. The scene’s beauty is amplified by the spider web’s evanescence. In the modernist poem “Sunday Morning,” Wallace Stevens observes that “death is the mother of beauty,” and so, too, Godman, the dying pedestrian, moralizes about the temporal webs that “exhaled in an hour or two” (46). He must have viewed the webs, however, in a hopeful light. Though the transitory wisps would disappear by noon-day,

²⁰John Muir’s famous dictum comes from *First Summer in Sierra* (1878). This text is one of the finest examples of pedestrian literature to arise from the American West.

²¹See Donald Worster’s *A Passion for Nature: the Life of John Muir* for a thorough analysis of Muir’s life and environmental ethos.

paradoxically they returned every morning renewed. These webs, because of their fragile splendor, “offered contemplation” and operated for Godman as tangible reminders of a benevolent Creator’s works. Additionally, these beauties were singularly available to any pedestrian, one who moved afoot across landscapes and was able to visualize and understand the divine whispers that were arrayed before him. Horseman and carriage-takers may fail to know this joy because they thrashed through the webs and hedgerows at speeds which muted attention to nature’s subtleties.

Another passage that finds Godman *leaning*, though not advocating, for a more contemporary understanding of the natural world derives from essay “IX.” These middle chapters of *Rambles* – “No. V” -“No. IX” – comment on his years spent as a gentleman doctor practicing in rural Maryland. Here Godman reminisces back to a time when he lived, worked, and walked in an “aged forest of pine.” Maryland’s temperate biomes provided Godman with additional evidence of the singular value of nature: both scientifically and spiritually. The first half of the selection finds Godman musing on the beauty of the forest, while the final paragraph of “IX” concludes with a move toward conservation. Notice in the following passage how his walking informs his observations. They are part and parcel of his particular way of viewing and understanding landscape:

[The pines] robust and gigantic trunks rise an hundred or more feet high, in purely proportioned columns, before the limbs begin to diverge; and their tops, densely clothed with long, bristling foliage, intermingle so closely as to allow of but slight entrance to the sun. Hence, the undergrowth of such forests is comparatively slight and thin, since none but shrubs, and plants that love the shade, can flourish under this perpetual exclusion of the animating and invigorating rays of the great exciter of the vegetable world. Through such forests, and *by the merest foot-paths, in great part, it was my lot to pass many miles almost every day; and had I not endeavored to derive some amusement and instruction from the study of the forest itself, my time would have been as fatiguing to me, as it was certainly quiet and solemn.* (96)

Godman's notion that nature amuses and instructs certainly was not new to the world of natural history. However, his focus on the solemn wonder of the "common pitch pine" highlights his understated genius. Godman's previous attitudes toward the mollusk's shell and the spider's web are brought to bear with his particular aesthetic concerning what should be deemed beautiful, worthy of admiration, and, as we shall see, afforded some form of preservation. After all, pitch pines (*pinus rigida*) were hardly the regal or poetic timber of eastern forests. Ranked far below oaks and chestnuts in ascetic appreciation, pitch pines – so named for their usefulness to naval stores – have

long been considered more utilitarian than solemn.²² Yet Godman makes a point to inform his readers that it was here, among the pines that he conducted some of his most essential walks. Godman daily journeyed “by the merest footpath” through these unsung places, and it is through this physical contact that he is able to buttress a love of walking against both mystical contemplation and scientific details. He goes on to write about the pines:

The ground was covered with the soft layer or carpet of dried pine leaves which gradually and imperceptibly fall throughout the year, making a most pleasant surface to tread on, and rendering the step perfectly noiseless. By beating off with a stick all the dried branches that projected towards the vacant space, I formed a sort of chamber, fifteen or twenty feet long, which above was canopied by the densely-mingled branches of the adjacent trees, which altogether excluded or scattered the rays of the sun, and on all sides was so shut in by the trunks of the young trees, as to prevent all observation. Hither, during the hot season, I was accustomed to retire for the purpose of reading or meditation and within this deeper solitude, where all was solitary, very many of the subsequent movements of my life were suggested or devised. (98)

²² See William Carey Grimm’s discussion of the pitch pine in *The Illustrated Book of Trees*. Pgs 50-52.

Ecologists have argued that the mature forests are not solely defined by aged trees and tall canopies. They are created and maintained by density and richness trapped within the untrammelled forest floor. In the preceding passage, Godman fortuitously reveals one of the primary faculties of all ancient forests – compact and thriving soil. Years before coinage of key terms as “old growth” and “ecology,” Godman certainly understood Thoreau’s maxim that “heaven [was] under [his] feet as well as over [his] head.” When he chose the “soft layer or carpet of dried pine leaves” for his inner sanctum, he was making a conscious evaluation of the importance of such places to the well-being of sensitive humans (98). His evaluation of the forest scene, however, is not purely humanistic. True to his style, Godman juxtaposes a philosophical bent against personal, scientific-minded observation. He follows his poetic praise of the woodland, with clear observations of particular trees, insect infestations, and the role of woodpeckers and fire to a forest’s health. Godman concludes his walking reminisces by offering what must have been a unique way of understanding the so-called Pine Barrens:

The pine tree may be looked upon as one of the most universally useful of the sons of the forest. For all sorts of building, for firewood, tar, turpentine, rosin, lamp-black, and vast variety of other useful products, this tree is invaluable to man. Nor is it a pleasing contemplation, to one who knows its usefulness, to

observe to how vast an amount of it is annually destroyed in this country, beyond the proportion that nature can possibly supply. However, we are not disposed to believe that this evil will ever be productive of very great injury, especially as coal fuel is becoming annually more extensively used. Nevertheless, were I the owner of a pine-forest, I should exercise a considerable degree of care in the selection of the wood for the axe. (98)

Inevitably, Godman's first impulse is to consider serviceable aspects of the trees. He offers their worth as product, raw goods for a mercantile economy. Though with further consideration he writes, "Nor is it a pleasing contemplation, *to one who knows its usefulness*, to observe how vast an amount of it is annually destroyed in this country" (98). The linchpin to this stance hides in the appositive phrase "to one who knows its usefulness." To what "usefulness" does Godman here refer? Certainly, the pine's "usefulness" for building, tar, and turpentine are duly noted, so what else could he be implying? Taken in context with the entirety of *Rambles*, the most "useful" aspect of the pines stems from a compression of scientific and poetic observation. The true "usefulness" of the forest arises directly from corporal as well aesthetic experience; this is to say, walking and watching.

Without a doubt, Godman ends with a certain naiveté concerning any "very great injury" toward the American forests, and his belief in the promise of emerging

coal production rings quaint to contemporary readers who realize the legacy of air and soil pollution that followed on the heels of King Coal. There remains, however, that hint from Godman which suggests he may have been seeking a balance between economics and nature. He concludes with a telling affirmation of the woods, and their importance: “were I the owner of a pine-forest, I should exercise a considerable degree in the selection of the wood for the axe.” These lines further intimate that Godman’s attitude toward land was propelled by forward thinking notions; ideas that were cut short by the consumption that had compromised his health and stymied his career.

It is fascinating to muse upon Godman’s life had it had stretched a mere twenty to thirty years beyond its allotted fate. How might have his thoughts adjusted and morphed into a more mature and profound understanding of the natural world? What other texts of rambling and viewing would he have contributed? How many more miles would he have walked? Perhaps such supplications are foolhardy, given that so many authors leave with half-realized casks. Yet, if readers are to gain access into what Godman may have continued to write and deliberate upon, they need to look no further than his own local grounds of Germantown and the rolling waters along the Wissahickon Creek. It seems likely that Godman would have made this landscape his own personal laboratory to observe and test the emerging theories of the mid-century.

He wrote of the Germantown terrain with such knowing that it bears to revisit his old walking grounds with fresh eyes.

3.2 Godman's Ground: The Wissahickon

Godman starts "No. 1" with geographic specificity: "one of my favorite walks was through Turner's Lane, which is about a quarter mile long and not much wider than an ordinary street, being closely fenced in on both sides" (40). Here his first order of business is to meditate on the "a gentle elevation of turf beneath the lower rails of the fence, which appear to be uninterruptedly continuous" (40). Through this first letter, Godman seeks out the aforementioned hidden and seemingly mundane creatures of Germantown. He goes on to tell that "Turner's Lane" runs into a prominent Germantown thoroughfare, "the Ridge Road." These details, coupled with Godman's eye for the "dykes and dams, meadow banks, etc," serve as compass needles to the unnamed creek of his jaunts – the Wissahickon.

Wissahickon Creek has long been a part of greater Philadelphia's mythos. It originates west of town in Montgomery County and flows for twenty-six miles before spilling into the Schuylkill River. The creek takes its name from a possible corruption of the Lenape tribe's Algonquian words "Wisauksickan (yellow-colored stream) and Wisamickan (catfish creek)" (Daly 13). One of the first Europeans recorded to have settled along the Wissahickon was a mystic named John Kelpius. In the late 1600s, Kelpius

headed a group of religious hermits known as The Society of the Woman of the Wilderness. These spiritualists, who undoubtedly walked the hills and banks along the Wissahickon, left little evidence of their studies, yet their presence in the valley has added to the creek's mysterious aura.

After the fading of Kelpius and his followers, the land along much of the creek was turned arable. In quick succession, timber was felled and mills and taverns began to spring up along its bank. America's first paper plant was constructed on the Wissahickon, and by the middle of the nineteenth century, no fewer than 60 mills were positioned throughout the watershed.²³

West of Philadelphia the creek meanders along rolling country, yet as it passes the townships of Chestnut Hill and Germantown, the banks on the sides of the Wissahickon rise and the water drops into a deep gorge, reminiscent to those found in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Surrounded on each side by high bluffs, the ravine itself was almost unreachable until 1826 when citizens destroyed a massive boulder that had obstructed access into the greater gorge.

²³In 1922, the Garden Club of Pennsylvania published T.A. Daley's *The Wissahickon*. The text is a hybridized study of the creek. Part natural history, part biography, the work considers the Wissahickon from its pre-European years to the dawn of the twentieth century. Daley discusses early "improvements" to the creek on pgs 30-39.

Curiously, Godman never calls the Wissahickon by name. He prefers instead to describe the landscape by degrees and to mention the surrounding lanes that wind near its banks. But why would Godman keep silent about a creek that had so long enchanted the area? The answer lies perhaps with Godman's original audience, and stems from the fact that the Wissahickon as literary destination arose several years after Godman's publication of *Rambles*. Recall that initially *Rambles* was published in serial form. The readership of *Friend* was a decidedly local audience who would have known the landmarks around greater Philadelphia just as Godman understood them. *Rambles'* directives such as "along Turner's lane" would have cued his readers to the actual place of his walks. There would have been no need to name the spots given; the environs had already been designated.

Additionally, the fame of the Wissahickon as a literary subject, worthy of pilgrimage, was not solidified until two visitors to Philadelphia, Fanny Kemble and Edgar Allan Poe, placed their writers' stamps on its rolling water. Fanny Kemble, an esteemed British actress and diarist, is considered the artist who created a literary Wissahickon. She viewed the creek through the eyes of a tourist, and her descriptions arose from jaunts undertaken while residing in Philadelphia during the run of a play in 1834 and 35. Her images of the creek, though lovely in their evocation of the setting, are typical of other English travelers' experience in American nature. The romantic

impulses of Kemble provide a surplus of “amber glow” to her writing; however, little of the creek’s hidden details are revealed. In light of Godman’s knowledge of the place, Kemble’s perception rings beautifully superficial. One of her more famous passages about the Wissahickon arises from a December 30th 1835 journal entry:

The thick, bright, rich-tufted cedars [] basking in the warm amber glow, the picturesque mill, the smooth open field, along whose side the river waters, after receiving this child of the mountains into their bosom, wound deep, and bright, and still, the whole radiant with the softest light I ever beheld, formed a most enchanting and serene subject of contemplation. (67)

Poe refers to Kemble’s description in his own travelogue “Morning on the Wissahickon.” He expresses that “it was not until Fanny Kemble [...] pointed out to the Philadelphians the rare loveliness of a stream which lay at their own doors, that this loveliness was more than suspected by a few adventurous pedestrians of the community” (190-191). It is occult whether or not Poe had Godman in mind as one of the “adventurous pedestrians” who had frequented the creek before Kemble’s esteem, yet Poe was clear that her journals had sparked a crowd of “Philadelphian picturesque hunters” to the scene (191). Poe’s short sketch, which ostensibly recounts a morning he experienced walking to and floating on the creek, was first published in the 1844 annual

The Opal, and it later became known popularly as “The Elk,” due to an etching printed on its cover page.²⁴

Poe’s narrator counsels his audience to seek the Wissahickon along the same entrance that Godman mentions in *Rambles*, “No. 1”: “I would advise the adventurer who would behold its finest points to take the *Ridge Road*, running westward from the city, and, having reached the second lane beyond the sixth mile-stone, to follow this lane to its termination” (my italics, Poe 194). Regardless of Poe’s role as riddle-making tour guide – “[turn] at the sixth mile-stone” – his access to the creek reinforces that Godman must have used this route on numerous walks to the water. Clearly, both Poe and Kemble sought out the more wild aspects of the Wissahickon, and thus their writings are in a more “scenic” mode those of Godman’s. This is not unexpected. Poe’s prose captures the vibrancy of the inner gorge because his experience arises from the temporal and impressionable eyes of a visitor:

I have already said, or should have said, that the brook is narrow. Its banks are generally, indeed almost universally, precipitous, and consist of high hills, clothed with noble shrubbery near the water, and crowned, at a greater elevation, with some of the most magnificent forest-trees of America, among which stands conspicuous the *Liriodendron Tulipifera*. The immediate shores,

²⁴For more information see Dawn B. Sova’s *Edgar Allan Poe A to Z*. Pg. 79.

however, are of granite, sharply defined or moss-covered, against which the pellucid water lolls in its gentle flow, as the blue waves of the Mediterranean upon the steps of her palaces of marble. Occasionally in front of the cliffs, extends a small definite plateau of richly-herbaged land, affording the most picturesque position for a cottage and garden which the richest imagination could conceive. (193)

Though Poe stumbles on his simile which compares the decidedly American stream with “the blue wave of the Mediterranean upon the steps of her palaces of marble,” it possesses the same flare of description as Kemble’s praise (193). Given the “wild scenery” of the inner gorge, one could feel slighted by Godman’s choice to write of his walks west of the valley’s heart; Godman never mentions the ravine in his text or his wanderings. As far as *Rambles* is concerned, he remains limited to the pastoral edges of the creek which were “my old-hunting grounds” (44). Again, this omission does not surprise when taken in the context of *Rambles*. He does not seek out the merely scenic and picturesque areas of a landscape. Instead his walks take him along the simple shorelines where he can find connections between creation and humanity in a kind middle ground between the green wood and field.

Notice how Godman’s words, though lacking the brisk verbiage of both Kemble and Poe, reveal his understanding. Here the “hunting-grounds” mingle with “various

particulars” of the land, as the local swains provide the rising and falling cadence of his anecdote:

My next visit to my old hunting-ground the lane and brook, happened on a day in the first hay-harvest when the verdant sward of the meadows was rapidly sinking before the keen-edged scythes swung by vigorous mowers. This unexpected circumstance afforded me considerable pleasure, for it promised me a freer scope to my wanderings, and might also enable me to ascertain various particulars concerning which my curiosity had long been awakened. Nor was this promise unattended by fruition of my wishes. (44)

The previous selection offers a more realistic glimpse into the greater Germantown landscape of the early to mid nineteenth century than either Kemble or Poe. Recall that during Godman’s life, the Wissahickon’s banks west of the gorge were deforested and given over to the mowers and mills. Godman seems delighted with “this unexpected circumstance” provided by the “hay-harvest,” which opened up the high-grown fields and fed his curiosity and walk. This yearly cycle of planting and harvesting along the banks of the Wissahickon would not cease until the creek fell under the aegis of city municipalities soon after the Civil War.

In 1868, the city of Philadelphia’s Fairmount Park annexed much of the Wissahickon as a “gift” to the people of Pennsylvania. The primary reason for creating

the park, however, was not based on aesthetics. For years, citizens had been concerned with the quality of the city's potable water, and by mid-century plans were arranged to guard its fragile supply.²⁵ As one of the largest city parks in the United States, Fairmount's 9,000 acre greenway protects the watershed from urban encroachment as it provides crucial plant and animal habitat as well recreational and educational opportunities for the people for Philadelphia.²⁶

The central irony of Wissahickon's contemporary landscape is that the creek side has taken on the wild hue of Poe and Kemble's imaginative prose more so than Godman's. When walking through Fairmount Park, along the Forbidden Drive or on one of its varied footpaths, one feels that the power of Poe and Kemble's works lay in their ability to inspire.²⁷ Forward thinking citizens took Poe and Kemble's prose and

²⁵See Daley's discussion of Ben Franklin in *The Wissahickon*. In his diaries, Franklin had discussed the purity of the Wissahickon's water and the need to protect it for Philadelphia's drinking supply.

²⁶Friends of the Wissahickon was founded in 1924 "with a mission 'to preserve the natural beauty and wildness of the Wissahickon Valley and stimulate public interest therein'" (Friends). In addition to publishing a newsletter, Friends leads outreach groups, maintains trails, and raises funds to preserve the Wissahickon. Their website, www.fow.org provides information on both Fairmount Park and Wissahickon Creek.

²⁷Forbidden Drive runs on the creek's edge the length of the Wissahickon in Fairmount Park (seven miles). Closed to automobile traffic for nearly 100 years, this wide thoroughfare offers the best access to the creek and to the park's other trails. I walked along Forbidden Drive with Scott Quitlen, a Friends of the Wissahickon Trail ambassador and ecologist, in September 2009. His knowledge of the place and its legacy is quite helpful for those who would follow in Godman's footsteps, along one of the most beautiful creeks in the eastern United States.

turned them into reality. Gone are the mills and fields and that nourished Godman's thoughts; he would find the current Wissahickon, with its thick stands of hemlock and maple, beautiful, though almost unrecognizable. However, the more subtle realities prospering along the water's edge can still be mined. The muskrats still swim in the shallows, and spider webs still lace the morning trails, so one can imagine that it would not take long for Godman to find his old inspirations returning anew.

John D. Godman's legacy as a naturalist will never reach the esteem of Thoreau or Cooper; however, his dedicated practice of walking and watching certainly has a place in the annals of American nature writing in general and American pedestrian literature in specific. He was one of our first great walkers who understood the value of creating a relationship with the land over which he walked. Though Godman has faded from popular view, assuredly he was appreciated in his own day, and he may yet be viewed as a potent and influential contributor to American letters.

One of the writers who appreciated Godman's *Rambles of a Naturalists* and even borrowed heavily from its pages and episodic style was the novelist and playwright Elizabeth Fries Ellet. Ellet published her own travel account entitled *Rambles about the Country* in 1840. The text provides a much needed glimpse into female walkers of the nineteenth century, and throughout her *Rambles*, Ellet confirms that women were just as capable and eager as men to trudge along the open road and across solitary fields.

4 ELIZABETH FRIES ELLET: RAMBLES IN THE SOUTH

The opening pages of Elizabeth Fries Ellet's 1840 travelogue *Rambles about the Country* borrow from Dr. John D. Godman's own thoughts toward walking: "[...] The recollection of my walks is productive of a satisfaction, which past pleasures seldom bestow" (11). Without question, Ellet's work owes much to Godman's *Rambles of a Naturalist*; like the good doctor, she develops a quick rapport with her audience, and she invites personal exploration of the American countryside. Ellet's narrative voice, however, does not merely parrot *Rambles of a Naturalist*. Her own *Rambles* serves as an intriguing representation of American female walking, and her descriptions of the nation, particularly the Antebellum South, provide glimpses into a landscape often omitted by other nineteenth century travel writers.

Ellet's position in American literature is tertiary but secure. Born in Sodus Point, New York, in October 1818, Elizabeth Fries Ellet was renowned as a productive author who wrote poetry, essays, criticism, drama, and history. Ellet enjoyed a privileged childhood, was schooled in Geneva, New York, and finished her instruction at Friend's Female Seminary in Aurora.²⁸ With an education steeped in the classics and language study, her early writing primarily consisted of poetry and translations. Even at a young

²⁸See Kandi Taybei's biographical sketch of Ellet in *Early American Nature Writers*. Pgs 105-110.

age, Ellet was engaged in improving the minds of her female contemporaries. As Kandi Taybei explains, “she wished to make Continental texts available to women not trained in foreign languages” (106).

This desire to educate the literate but untrained would further manifest in Ellet’s *Rambles about the Country*. At its heart, the work promotes the nationalistic and idealistic vision that American landscape functions as a cipher between the individual and “moral nobleness.” For this compact to be fulfilled, one must leave the confines of the inside world. In her introduction to *Rambles*, Ellet professes, “Truly, there is much to nourish a national pride, in the glorious gifts with which Nature has enriched our land [...] And were not these physical wonders designed by Providence, to harmonize with moral nobleness?” (9). Undoubtedly, Ellet’s words resound those of Thomas Jefferson’s in *Notes on the State of Virginia* when he argued for the unique blessings of America. After all, as Michael P. Branch asserts, “it was Jefferson who articulated the belief that contact with the land [...] was an ennobling pursuit that would help unify the nation” (169). The impetus for Ellet’s foray into travel writing arose from her own experiences in what must have seemed an exotic terrain – the landscape of the American South.

At age 17, the author married William Henry Ellet. Soon after their nuptials, Ellet’s husband took a position teaching chemistry in Columbia, South Carolina, at the South Carolina College. Ellet would spend over ten years in the South. Her years in

Columbia were productive ones as she published in a variety of genres, most notably her *Rambles about the Country*. After her return to New York in the late 1840's, Ellet's life was a mixture of triumph and scandal. Her most lauded work remains a groundbreaking study of women's contribution to the War of Independence: *The Women of the American Revolution* (1848-50). This three volume opus profiles the lives of over 100 women who aided America's struggle. The women range from well-known figures such as Abigail Adams to more obscure participants living on the frontier. Ellet was praised for her anecdotal style, which brought women's stories to life, as well as her considerable research skills.²⁹

Though Ellet is commended for *Women of the American Revolution*, her literary feuds of the 1840's and 50's have tarnished her legacy with contemporary scholars. Ellet's quarrel with Edgar Allan Poe concerning his epistolary flirtation with the poet Frances Sargent Osgood, while they were both married, as well as her later dispute with editor Rufus Griswold suggests that Ellet was a woman who did not shy away from jousting with powerful and lionized figures.³⁰ However in 1840, years before Ellet would lock horns with Poe and Griswold, she was an ambitious, young writer living in

²⁹Ellet's *The Women of the American Revolution* is still studied in university history courses.

³⁰While intriguing, the details of the Ellet/Poe feud are beyond the scope of this study; however, a full account can be read in Sidney P. Moss's *Poe's Literary Battles: the Critic in the Context of His Literary Milieu* (1969).

the provincial town of Columbia. It was a place that existed worlds away from the intrigues of New York.

As noted in the Estwick Evans' chapter, travel literature in America had a steady readership and established conventions by mid-century. After Lewis and Clark's opening of the West, both American and European authors set out in legion to describe and to define the landscapes of this seemingly new country. Invariably, this genre was dominated by males. Rebecca Solnit writes that "Travel, whether local or global, has remained a largely masculine prerogative [...] with women often the destination, the prize, or the keepers of the hearth (235)." Ellet's text, while not at the forefront of the genre, does portray an early example of American women taking to the field. Some of the more influential nineteenth century American female travelogues and frontier literature were published in years following Ellet's *Rambles*. For example, Caroline Kirkland's *A New Home – Who'll Follow* (1841), Margaret Fuller's *Summer on the Lakes* (1845) and Susan Fenimore Cooper's *Rural Hours* (1850) offered no antecedents for Ellet's work. Consequently, Ellet was more inclined to be influenced by European travelers, as she juxtaposed her indigenous walks against the tours of foreigners and the well-traveled, typical destinations of the mid-century.

Ellet's initial words in *Rambles* exhibit her desire to differentiate it from other travel sketches: "Foreigners, who have *visited* the United States, have spoken with

rapture of *our* charming scenery. The ordinary routes, in almost all the States, [...] conduct the traveler among scenes of loveliness and grandeur [...] by the descriptions lavished on them by a hundred pens" (my italics 9). Ellet's passage hinges on the subtle usage of "visited" and "our." *Rambles* sets out to describe scenery from the position of a child of the Republic and not as a "foreign" sightseer who tends to the usual, sublime locations. She notes that

This land abounds with scenes of beauty, which have seldom been noticed by tourists. Many a fair waterfall utters its music only to the echoes of the primitive forest; many a picturesque lake or stream reflects its music only to the ancient trees, that look into its face. Some of you, in your daily walks, may visit secluded spots, the sight of which would be deemed worth a trip across the ocean. (10)

Noticeably, Ellet possesses an anthropocentric vision of the natural world. In her view, nature must first be perceived and appreciated by humanity before gaining absolute worth. Ellet's words align with Ralph Waldo Emerson's posit in *Nature* (1836) that declares

the greatest delight which the fields and woods minister is the suggestion of an occult relationship between man and nature [...] yet it is certain that the power to

produce this delight does not reside in nature, but in man, or in harmony of both (7).

In addition to calling for a personal investigation of the “primitive forests,” Ellet empowers her audience by trusting in their ability to choose their own hidden and “secluded spots” for walking. She endorses Jefferson’s belief that there are many places in this new country worth crossing the ocean to view.³¹

Later in the paragraph Ellet explains that she, with readers in tow, will be rambling through some of America’s more obscure but accessible wonders. She claims that “[w]e shall not deem ourselves bound to keep the beaten path [...] but will wander at ‘our own sweet will’ wherever we may be tempted [...] we may still find something to cherish in us the love of Nature” (10). Ellet is inclined to employ the third person “we” as a method of including her audience in her walks. Walking literature had long addressed audiences; generally the address functioned as means of moralizing or adding emphasis to the inner state of a narrator’s mind. Ellet’s “we” signifies community as well as individuality. She desires her readers to imaginatively journey with her to the places described in *Rambles*, and then she hopes the text will prompt actual walking. Yet who was Ellet’s original audience?

³¹ Thomas Jefferson is attributed with saying that the view from the rocks above Harper’s Ferry, Virginia, “was worth a journey across the ocean to view.”

Rambles about the Country was perhaps the first walking literature marketed to children. Initially published for the Juvenile Series of “The School Library,” and sanctioned by the Massachusetts Board of Education, *Rambles* was one of several volumes printed as

a succession of instructive, suggestive, and thought-nourishing works, which will do much to cure both young and old of the habit of reading merely for pastime [...] and to excite the desire and lay open the field for serious reflection and diligent study on many subjects of the highest interest and moment. (*North American Review* 515)

The *North American Review* praised the entire series for its handsome bindings and “fountains of instruction” that were created to edify the youths of Massachusetts: “[The Juvenile Series] is philanthropic, and it is purely democratic; for it aims at enlightening and elevating a class who have the least opportunity for enlightening themselves” (NAR 516). *Ramblings* inclusion in the series illustrates how far the notion of pleasure walking had come by mid-century.

Additionally, Ellet’s status as a female walker alludes to a nascent feminine empowerment. *Rambles* does not possess an overt feminine agenda, yet its very inclusion in the collection speaks to the Juvenile Series’ liberal character. An 1840 volume of the *Christian Examiner* expressed the Board of Education’s overall goal that

the best writers in country should be employed to prepare either original or selected works – that the plan should embrace every department of science and literature – that no works of sectarian or partisan character should be admitted – that the tastes and purists [...] of all classes should be consulted. (132)

Ellet is careful not to appear “partisan” as she discusses her movement throughout America, yet it is her ability to express a deep awareness of multi-variance landscapes and her familiarity with mobility that grants agency to a work that was ostensibly written to instruct children on upstanding citizenship. In *Rambles* the reader is presented with a female persona and walker who finds no societal perimeters to her wanderings. Her movement, whether merely literary or experienced, lacks a self-consciousness and propriety that might be expected from a female writer bent on instructing young readers, many of whom no doubt were also female, about how to experience nature.

By mid-century, there was growing emphasis that young women should learn about the natural world. Most of this education, however, disseminated through flower and gardening texts which focused women’s emotional connection to hearth and home. As Tina Gianquitto observes in *Good Observers of Nature*, “the public’s understanding of women as the moral authority of the home determined [female authors’] vision of nature as a collection of interrelated domestic spaces” (3). Women’s societal role in

nature was “tied to mental improvement, moral action and domestic duty. The ideal observer had trained both the eye and the mind to read the scientific and moral geography of nature” (Gianquittio 3). Ellet does not explicitly undermine this domestic space; in fact, many of her walks take place near home. There is, though, a subversive character to her walking, a subtle political message that implies that women should train their legs as well as their eyes and minds toward the limitless outside country.

For example, *Rambles*' structure speaks to the radical underpinnings of Ellet's walking. The text consists of roughly twenty five essays, arranged in a fragmented and occult order. Its organization is one that leaves readers unaware as to the work's direction. One chapter may find Ellet strolling along the shores of Sodus Bay, New York, and the next sees her tramping through the swamps of South Carolina.

Individual walks in particular locations are themselves paramount and the travel time between each ramble remains nonexistent. One of the hallmarks of travel literature is an episodic style; however, Ellet's essays appear more arbitrary. It is the seemingly randomness of Ellet's destinations that serve to radicalize this text. Other early female travelers, such as Fanny Kemble, have distinct itinerary to their walks. They arrive, they see sights and interesting characters, and then they move on to further attractions.

Ellet's text lacks predictability; the entire country is open for discovery, and one chapter may find the reader hundreds of miles away from the last without any commentary or

justification. Even though Ellet prescribes to disjointedness, she does bookend *Rambles* with translations from German folk tales and in at least two chapters – “The Warm Springs of the Silko” and “A Ramble in Georgia” – she borrows heavily from other writers’ texts. The reliance on others’ observations lends credence that at least some Ellet’s of wanderings were rambles of research and reading rather than actual walking.

Ellet’s first essay “A Winter Evening’s Excursion” delights in the mild southern winters of South Carolina where the country “is grave and melancholy, though not devoid of beauty” (13). Here Ellet invites her northern readers to explore the fallow fields and pine forests of a southern plantation: “We must resort to the woods, for our pleasure-walk. There we shall be sure of finding something to compensate for our loss in the fields” (14). Even though Ellet provides intriguing descriptions of the winter forest, this first essay coupled with a “Christmas in the Parishes” reveals Ellet’s conservative attitude that plantations were places of communion between the master and slave: “The sable laborers may be termed the subject, who all owe allegiance to their common sovereign, the master. He is amenable to the laws of his country and to the opinion of society, for the manners in which he exercises his authority” (32). Such observations on the reciprocity between slave and master remain problematic for contemporary readers. She speaks knowingly of “the avenue of cedars [that] are cool

and delightful walks," but her failure to address the suffering of African-Americans taints both "A Winter Evening's Excursion" and "Christmas in the Parishes" (32).

Happily for the text, and present-day readers of walking literature, Ellet's outdated and naive comments on racial relations is limited mostly in two chapters. In short, *Rambles Southern sketches* are far more successful when commenting on pedestrian activities even though all of her Southern walks are invariably tinged with the onus of slavery.

For example, the chapter "A View on the Alabama River" attempts to focus intently on the act of walking and observing the natural world. However, when read closely, parts of the essay remain potentially troublesome. Ellet does not overtly mention the master and slave bond in "A View;" however, she does aestheticize African-America lodging and labor. Here black households become part of the landscape; they are devoid of individual suffering and instead become the idealized country abodes of swains and picturesque industry. Ellet writes, after a page of river-side and valley description,

The negro huts are built in regular files (the streets on small scale) and, neatly whitewashed with the smoke curling above them. The long furrows of the corn and cotton fields, fringed with the young and tender plant, the green sweep of forest, beyond, and the pine-ridge, distinctly marked against the horizon by its peculiar blue, – form an imposing picture. (74-75)

In the preceding passage, Ellet falls into the trap of beauty. Ellet's particular folly was common among mid-century travel writers, and Fredrick Douglass addresses the impulse his 1845 edition of *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. Douglass, writing a few short years after Ellet, discusses his master's "finely cultivated garden" (9). The grounds were famous for their bounty and beauty, and they attracted white visitors "from far and near" to explore them during the "summer months" (9). Douglass implies that the pedestrians are in a sense blinded to truth behind its cultivated order. This specious natural beauty cloaks regard for those who trimmed the hedge-fields and plowed the furrows. Perhaps such a claim of blindness could be leveled against Ellet, yet judging *Rambles* against twenty-first century attitudes on race seems unmerited, given that the text was meant to instruct youths on how to appreciate the out-of-doors as well as pleasures of travel. In addition, I must reiterate that the editors of *Rambles* professed that "no sectarian or partisan text should be admitted." Also, readers must remain mindful that Ellet was living in rural South Carolina at the time of the text's publication, and given her husband's professional position and her own literary ambition, she may have deemed flagrant criticism of the institution of slavery to be both professionally and personally impertinent. Regardless of the text's flawed observations about race, *Rambles* still succeeds in offering a personal, if not farsighted glimpse into the Antebellum Southern world .

Two of the more stimulating essays found in *Rambles* take place near her homestead in South Carolina and along the north Georgia hill country. “A Spring Day’s Ramble” finds Ellet mapping the parish around her plantation while “A Ramble in Georgia” drafts one of Ellet’s more intrepid walks among the deep ravines and waterfalls of the Blue Ridge.

4.1 Ellet’s Country: Walking in South Carolina and Georgia

A quick flowing stream crosses under rural route 267, also named McCord’s Ferry Road, in Calhoun County, South Carolina. Known locally as Wilson’s Creek, the water passes under at the bottom of a hill through otherwise flat terrain. The creek’s bed is sandy and runs smooth and clear. Undoubtedly spring fed, it resembles a highland stream, cool to the touch and lined with blue grass along its banks. A mile to the east, the stream’s water darkens as it empties into the Congaree and Wateree Rivers which in turn converge to form the Santee River. In Ellet’s time, Calhoun County was known as St. Matthew’s Parish, and the county’s seat still bears the old parish name. It is only a twenty-five minute drive to the state capital of Columbia, yet a rural atmosphere and culture still dominate.

Ellet's property, which she called Woodlawn, prospered near this low spot on McCord's Ferry Road.³² In her most localized essay, "A Spring Day's Ramble," she describes Wilson's Creek as it passed through her plantation:

One of the prettiest little streams, you ever saw, runs along this strip of land. Now, it glides, smoothly, under its fringe of alder and bramble; now it dashes over a log or stone, that happens to obstruct its way; now, it spreads over the turf, [...] It is worthy of note, that, though the rivers are generally muddy, from the washing of clay soil, the little branches, or rills, that abound throughout this country, are as bright and pure as any mountain stream. (76-77)

Ellet's use of the present tense "now it glides" and "now it dashes" remains faithful to the stream's contemporary appearance. As one stands on McCord's Ferry road and watches the little "rill" disappear behind a bend, it is not difficult to envision Ellet crossing the stream "by means of a piece of timber, laid from one side to the other," and walking up the hill toward her home or the Santee beyond (77). The exact house site, now lost to fire or termites, remains unknown. However, the landscape throughout the Santee watershed has maintained its agricultural richness; farmsteads still grow corn and peanuts, cotton and sweet potatoes.

³²Calhoun County historian Jeff Reid was helpful in providing information about the old parish, and he was instrumental in locating the locations where Ellet walked.

Ellet structures “Spring Day’s Ramble” around a single afternoon’s walk across the myriad attractions of St. Matthew’s parish. Just as Susan Fenimore Cooper condenses two years of walking into one calendar cycle in *Rural Hours*, Ellet truncates several jaunts into one day, thereby converging physical walking with literary license. The effect of Ellet’s multi-variant rambles serves to heighten her persona’s experience in the landscape as well as to promote a particularly artful quality to her walk. Until Ellet upland South Carolina, and much of the rural South, lacked the complimentary praise of landscapes like the Catskill Mountains or Niagara; Ellet fills in the map by promoting the notion that all places in America have experiential promise. Unfortunately, as Jack Temple Kirby explains, the South in general was viewed unfavorably by nineteenth century travelers: “Southern farmlands, owing to landscape morphology, forest clearance practices, [...] often were not neat, symmetrical, and aesthetically pleasing, especially to travelers from outside the region” (90-91). The South became regarded as a “rather ugly” place by “legions of European visitors, who came and went despairing” (91). By purposely combining walks, which reveal a “hidden beauty” to South Carolina, Ellet performs a small though powerfully redemptive act. She transforms St. Matthew’s Parish into a potential destination for walkers. As Lawrence Buell reminds us, “Environmental literature launches itself from the presumption that we do not think about our surroundings, and our relation to them, as much as we ought to. The best [...]

writers continually recalibrate familiar landscapes [...] to keep alive the sense of the ‘undiscovered country of the nearby’” (261-262). After all, if Ellet’s “soft and tranquil-looking landscape” can be viewed from a day’s outing, what hidden splendors await those who come to stay?

“Spring Day’s Ramble” divides into three distinctive sections: the first pages highlight her movement through the woods and fields around Woodlawn as she walks toward the Santee River; the second section comments on a local folk-story; and the third showcases a series of caverns near the water’s edge.

Ellet begins the walk with her typically familiar, yet humbled tone: “If you are not tired of accompanying me, we will take a short walk through the fields and over a hill or two, in the pleasant parish of St. --- in South Carolina” (75). What follows Ellet’s pastoral invitation are descriptions of South Carolina which rival any essay in the genre of the ramble. Moreover, Ellet’s first steps through St. Matthew’s Parish hearken quite familiar to those versed in Chaucer’s own great traveling poem: “When April with his showers sweet with fruit/ the drought of March has pierced unto the root [...] when Zephyr also has, with his sweet breath [...] then folk do long to go pilgrimage” (lines 1-12). Ellet invokes Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* as she harnesses the memory of her own walk:

Suppose, then, a bright and balmy Spring, when the air is pure and bland, and the sunshine warms enough to make the shade refreshing. We will set out from the hospitable mansion of Mr. R., for a walk to Prospect Wood, a little to the south-east. The wide view, on every side, upon a plantation, where thousands of acres are cultivated, affords a much more cheerful prospect, than that of the pine-land villages. You will observe the fields, that are not planted in cotton or corn, to be covered with a thick growth of broom-grass [...] its green in Spring is a great relief to the eye. The yellow flowers, called golden-rod, scattered thickly among the spears of grass, have also a pretty effect. (75-76)

Throughout the sketch, readers remain quite familiar that Ellet's stroll possesses an imaginative tone, one that makes no claim to the authenticity of a single walk. For example, words like "Suppose" and "You will observe" and, later, "here you may find" point to the amalgamated organization of this ramble. Instead of undercutting the account by combining walks, her impressionistic vision promotes her own familiarity with the place; yes, she may be a northern visitor to the South, but Ellet is certainly no interloper. Her familiarity with Woodlawn's environment provides her with the assumptive power of prognostication. She foretells what the careful walker will see if he or she practices the art of good and enthusiastic observation.

As the “Spring Day” nears a “precipitous bank” overlooking the Santee River, Ellet’s syrupy description of the flora, promotes the South’s fecundity:

The wild grape-vine entwines its fragrant wreaths over many of the boughs; and the yellow Jessamine hangs in graceful festoons; the wild honeysuckle grows, also, in great abundance. The perfume of these flowers renders the air almost heavy with its fragrance. (82)

Buttressed against this praise of indigenous plants, Ellet supplies a catalog of birdlife found around Woodlawn: “The little wren hops across your path, and the red-bird whistles from the boughs over your head. Here, too, are the bulfinch and thrush, with the blackbird and partridge [...] and a host of others” (82). While Ellet does not boast the ornithological eye or ear of other naturalists – what species is this “bulfinch”? – her ability to list a bevy of southern birds highlights sensitivity to her adopted home and an eagerness to learn the place.

The narration next travels to a curiosity, a rock outcropping “upon a bluff, overlooking the river, which bears the tract of a cloven hoof, and of a human foot; besides two-lines, that might have been made by a carriage” (84). Ellet recounts a neighboring legend of how Satan visited a family one night and “sup with them, after a game at cards” (84). The farmer’s wife dropped a card during the game and noticed that the stranger had one cloven foot. Fearing the worst, she immediately went to the

bedroom and brought out a bible. Next, she read the holy verses in reverse. The devil fled from this exorcism and as he leapt from the cliff, his cleft hoof embossed an indentation into the stone.³³

Locals refer to the rock outcropping that Ellet portrays as "The Devil's Track." The etchings of "Satan's" hoof and wagon-wheels still greet the observer, and though erosion has smoothed out the lines around the "cursed mark," it is not hard to picture Satan actually visiting this area. The land retains a wildness, and in the late afternoon, shadows quickly converge on this east-facing cliff. The site is located on private property, and a walker, if he or she were not given directions, could become quite disoriented in the broken landscape filled with invasive kudzu and English privet; however, the view from the Track remains much as it would have in Ellet's time. The Santee River stretches out in the distance and "the steep over-looks the swamp-land, through which the river flows; and that may be seen, like bright thread, in the distance, between groves of pine"(85).

By including the Devil's Track in her ramble, Ellet occupies the same myth-making stratum of writers like Washington Irving who infused the Catskill Mountains with such nationally regarded tales as "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and "The Devil

³³Jeff Reid recounted a more detailed version of the Devil's Tract legend than Ellet's.

and Tom Walker.” Just as Irving civilizes the landscape of New York with legends imported from Europe, Ellet’s inclusion of folklore is important to the South’s cultural independence. Though less developed than Irving’s stories, Ellet’s Devil Track anecdote gives her rambles in Calhoun a canvas for discovery. This land that she walks holds a storied place, rich with human history and as mysterious as any found in the Hudson River highlands.

Ellet concludes her excursion in St. Matthew’s by passing by through “a singular cavern, some miles distant” from the Devil’s Track (86). Called “Cave Hall,” it consists of a series of grottos and stone amphitheatres that were created by erosion from the surrounding limestone. Ellet’s eye for detail impresses, and the cave still bears much of the same features that Ellet would encounter: “The walls are full of cavities and recesses. Two of the last are wide enough to hold a bed, and one is a complete bedchamber, entered by a natural door, and curiously lighted by a hole which serves a window” (87). Again, Ellet’s walk is quite liberating in that she never mentions a companion other than the accompanying reader, even as she walks into the darkness of Cave Hall. Showing no fear, she encourages a torch-lit investigation of the interior:

If you place a lighted pine knot in each of the larger recesses, and one at the furthest part of the cave [...] it presents a wild and romantic appearance. You

cannot see its limits; and the dark yawning abyss seems to stretch far into the bowels of the earth. (87)

Once she is outside the cave, Ellet follows a stream through the woods and into a "broad strip of land" filled with cane-brakes. Here the stream passes a wealth of native plants as it leads her to an archetypical symbol of the Antebellum South – a cotton gin. The gin rises up unexpectedly from end of pond and dominates the landscape in a white luxuriance where "The seed falls in a heap, without, and looks like masses of dirty snow" (89).

Ellet does not pause or muse on the two juxtaposed images of the wood and gin; instead, she rather abruptly ends the walk's narrative. Neither does she mention the trip homeward, nor any other sights beyond the gin. The final words of "A Spring Day's Ramble" return to her self-investigatory theme of the "beautiful things" which surround each American community: "All must look for themselves; and, if you use your eyes to good purpose, during a short walk of an hour, you will never fail to find enough, largely to repay your attention" (89).

"A Spring Day's Ramble" exposes the beauty and mystique of an anonymous corner of South Carolina, but Ellet's next walk "A Ramble in Georgia" illustrates that she was also interested in promoting natural areas that were already revered and fast becoming tourist destinations. Set in northeast Georgia, "A Ramble" centers on a series

of falls known at the time as “The Ravine of Tallulah,” and it is one of Ellet’s essays which depends a great deal on a previous narrative by A. Foster, published in an 1828 edition of the *American Journal of Science and the Arts*. Nonetheless, “A Ramble” presents Tallulah before the onslaught of tourism that would overtake and alter the gorge during the late Victorian age.

Ellet starts “A Ramble” by describing Georgia as a sister-state to South Carolina: “the traveler through Georgia will not find that the face of the country varies much from the Carolinas” (64). She goes on to depict the swamps filled with a “vast dismal morass” that are “covered with a ragged thicket of trees” (64). The land turns deadly as she continues to tell of the “alligator slumber[ing] in the sedgy grass” and “the lizard and the snake bask[ing] in the green ooze” (65). All of this ominous description leads up to Ellet’s warning that “the hot sun, upon these swamps, creates noxious exhalations, which render it a dangerous adventure, during the Summer months, to pass the night in their vicinity” (65).

Ellet’s caution of the “dangerous adventure” along the southern coast was well-founded. Throughout the nineteenth century, malaria and yellow fever outbreaks in summer months sickened thousands living in the low-country.³⁴ Blamed on fumes that

³⁴See Margaret Humphreys’ chapter “The Mist Rises: Malaria in the Nineteenth Century” in *Malaria: Poverty, Race, and Public Health in the United States* (2001). Pgs 30-49.

arose from stagnant waters of wetlands, “swamp fevers” inflicted by mosquitoes led those with means to seek respite and “clean air” in the mountains.

This craving to escape illness coupled with an interest in sublime scenes created a cottage industry of traveler’s rests in the southern Appalachians. Ellet observes these early lodges as “rustic dwellings” where “you may obtain, at one of these places, designated as a tavern, a tolerably good breakfast of bacon, biscuits, and reeking cornbread, with muddy coffee, unless you prefer the water from the neighboring spring” (65). Even with these newly sprung accommodations, there was no ease of traveling to and staying in the Georgia mountains. In this respect, a hike in the southern highlands differed from an excursion to established spots like those in New York or even Natural Bridge in Virginia.³⁵ Ellet’s tour of north Georgia ambulates Tallulah Falls in present day Rabun and Habersham counties. Tallulah actually consists of six individual cascades that flow through a dramatically steep ravine, cut by the Tallulah River, and enclosed on all sides by sheer cliffs and broken ground.³⁶ James Mooney claims in *Myths of the Cherokee* that the word Tallulah “cannot be translated;” however, some claims report that it derives from “terrible” (278). Regardless, few had heard of

³⁵For an in depth report on tourism in Appalachia during the nineteenth century, see Kevin O’Donnell’s introductory chapter “Scenery, Markets, and Mountaineers” found in *Seekers of Scenery: Travel Writing from Southern Appalachia 1840-1900* (2004). Pgs 1-38.

³⁶Each falls possesses a fanciful name – listed in order of their travel through the gorge: Ledore, Tempesta, Hurricane, Oceana, Bridal Veil, and Lover’s Leap.

the gorge in the early years of the century, but in 1819, after the Cherokee had ceded more land in Georgia, David Hillhouse published the first public account of the falls in a September edition of the *Georgia Review*. As expected, Hillhouse's report musters a great amount of literary enthusiasm for this "new" discovery. He writes, "The latter [Rapids of Tallulah] is almost unknown to any person beyond its neighborhood – it however merits to be known and admired as one of the greatest curiosities of the United States" (Hillhouse). Soon after Hillhouse positions the falls as an American treasure, he makes a clear link with it and other more famed geologic anomalies:

At this spot the river passes through a range or ridge of mountains
for somewhat more than a mile, forming for its bed an awful gulf
[...] like those of the river Niagara, just below its great cataract, and
of the Genesee river, below the fall in the stream, a few miles above
Lake Ontario.

But unlike the popular falls of the north, Hillhouse evokes a landscape that seems antithetical to human visitation. Even the Cherokee, who had dwelled in the land for an epoch, avoided traveling there³⁷:

In a wild, uncultivated and barren country, no art had been introduced

³⁷ One Cherokee myth stated that Tallulah gorge was inhabited by a race of little people who lured humans to their doom in the raging waters. James Mooney writes in *Myths of the Cherokee* that even before their removal, Native Americans were rarely seen fishing or traveling through the area.

to deface this grand exhibition of nature – its neighborhood is inhabited only by ferocious beasts of prey, bears, wolves and wild cats, and soaring eagles, and fairy people. [...] At the instant he views the current some hundred feet below him, he shrinks back in apprehension of his own destruction. (Hillhouse)

Hillhouse's article in *Georgia Review* sensationalized the danger and beauty of Tallulah; however, by the late 1830's the falls were still rarely witnessed by outsiders. James Silk Buckingham, an English traveler, attests to its remote quality his travelogue *The Slave States of America* (1842):

We heard that the northern portion of Georgia, in the territory lately to occupied by the Cherokee Indians, contained some beautiful mountain-scenery, admits two splendid Falls, but *little visited by foreigners*, yet equal in beauty and interest to any thing of the kind in the South. (my italics 172)

Southern writers hoped to change Tallulah Fall's obscurity. Apart from the raw beauty of Tallulah, there seems to have been an earnest desire, perhaps attributed to Southern pride, perhaps encouraged by commercial development, to parade Tallulah as competition for Niagara. In the text from which Ellet borrows, an 1828 edition of *American Journal of Science and the Art*, A. Foster confesses that

It is not now in my power to gratify the curiosity of my northern friends, by describing everything that delighted or astonished our little party of travelers. [...] If you have imagined southern scenery to be tame and uniform, your disappointment, like my own, will be gratifying and complete. (209)

Foster's essay acts as an enticement for other scientifically or adventuresome pedestrians to "be induced to visit the place "and witness the surprising and terrible wonder of Tallulah.

Once visitors had made their way to this hidden spectacle, how were they to proceed? How does one walk into a gorge? According to Ellet, very carefully. She takes her ostensibly young readers to the very edge of a cliff and peers with them, vicariously gasping, into the "abyss":

Walk through the trees a little way; but, be careful where you tread. a fearful precipice is just in front of you. Now, you stand on the brink of the wild abyss. Lofty trees, rooted in the crevices of the rocks, shelve down beneath you. Above their summits, soar the eagle and the vulture; yet they are still *below* you.[...] Huge rocks are hurled, confusedly, at the base of the precipice, and broken masses of rock are piled above them. [...] Far in the depth, at a distance, the river dashes through the wood.

(65-66)

Consider Ellet's words against another traveler, George Cook, who walked Tallulah and issued an account of the falls in the *Southern Literary Messenger* the same year as Ellet's *Rambles* was published:

The visitor in approaching this scene finds himself on the verge of a yawning chasm; down which he looks, perhaps a thousand feet, and near as many wide, cleaving the mountains for several miles [...] There, the water is caught into a basin of its own carving in the solid granite, and is then dashed down a precipice in the whitest foam, and whirled from side to side, meandering, until another fall engulfs it, and then another, until lost in the sinuosities of its own dark channel. (44)

Both passages possess a vibrancy that arises from the freshly explored place, and both authors are sent grasping for language, hoping to give breath to the natural wonder that they believe holds national as well as individual import. The differences between the two selections lay in Ellet's clever use of perspective. While each writer employs the present tense, Ellet chooses to incorporate the second person "you." She pushes and prods her audience toward the cliff's edge, and uses the passive construction of "huge rocks are hurled" to amplify the mysterious quality of Tallulah. Hurlled by whom? Cast from where? Further, she accentuates cliff's height by pointing at eagles flying "below"

the spectator, and then concludes her piece with the rumbling sound of the falls far below the watcher.

After walking along the rim, and then descending into the gorge where walking gives way to looking up at crags that are so steep that “no human foot could climb the awful steep,” Ellet stops by pooling waters below a turret and experiences the cathartic reaction typical of many who have just experienced the “sublime works of the creator” (66). She feels a great calm:

At the Fall, you descend to the bed of river, and watch its troubled course, till, once again at peace, its subsiding waves flow calmly on. So that your own spirit, agitated by this scene of wild sublimity, will be subdued into humble adoration. (66)

It is here, on the gorge’s rocky floor, that Ellet gives over her narrative to A. Foster. For the next few pages, Ellet appropriates whole chunks of Foster’s description of Tallulah before climbing out of the ravine and shifting her focus to another geological marvel near the gorge– The Falls of Toccoa.

Travelers to the area would often juxtapose the two sites. Tallulah was the frightful tumult and Toccoa was the “fairy-like stream” (70). Ellet’s account is no different. She writes, “if you are breathless with awe, beside the rude grandeur of Tallulah, your feelings, here, are attuned to calm admiration” (70). In the next

paragraph, “A Ramble in Georgia” jumps from Toccoa falls to praising the Chattahoochee river miles to the south. It is a place, Ellet writes, “enough to feed the imagination of the wanderer” (71). Ellet’s fragmented description and often jarring leaps through time and place hearken back to her walk in “Spring Day’s Ramble” and to the overall structure of *Rambles about the Country*. For Ellet, the joy of walking compressed within natural scenery takes precedent over the drudgery of carriage travel and the complications of human interaction that would invariably have had to occur between these stretches of landscapes.

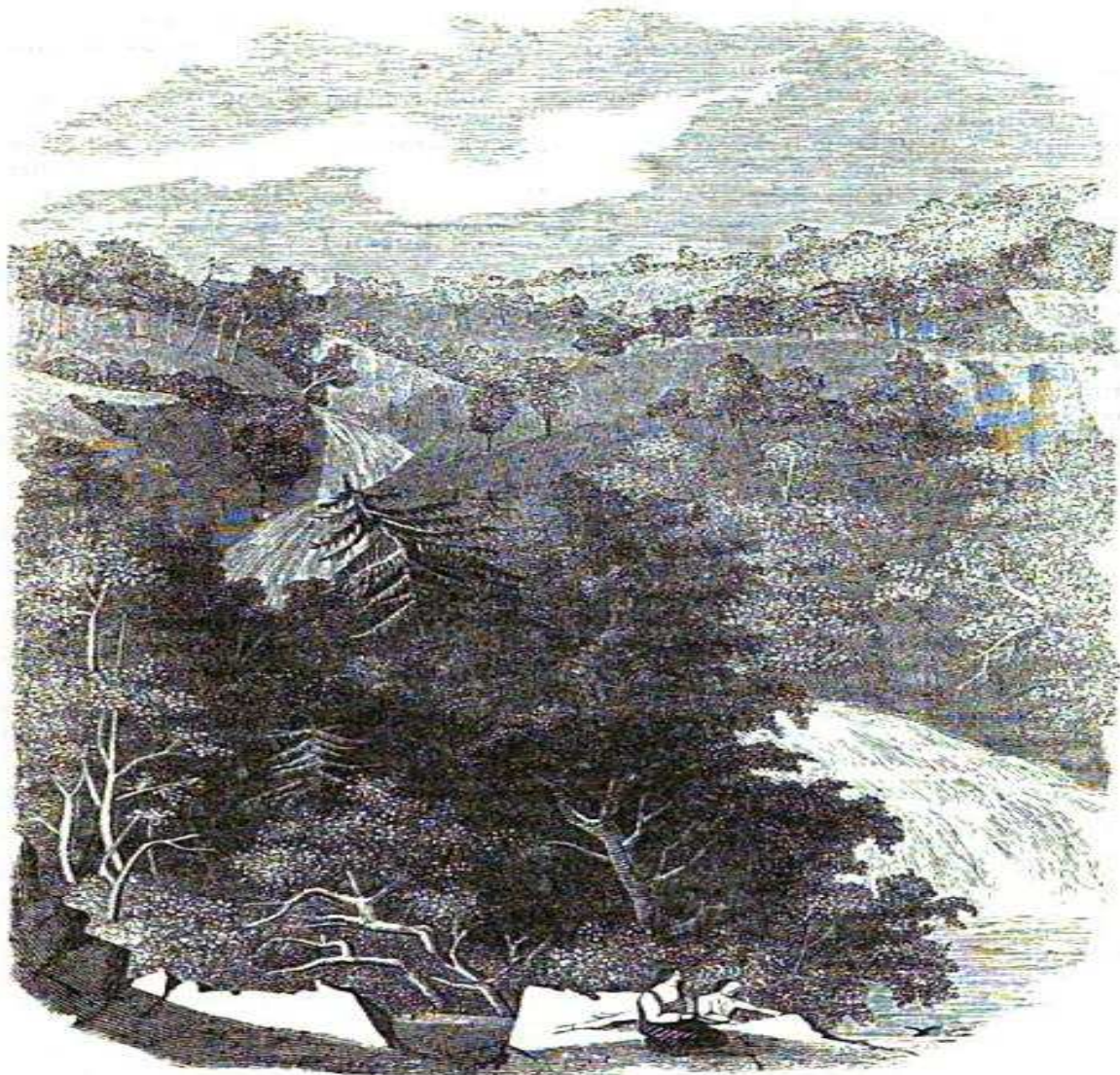
Regardless of Ellet’s impressionistic style, works such as “A Ramble” certainly exposed north Georgia to readers and opened it to hordes of visitors. By the second half of the century, thanks in part to the improvement of rail lines, secluded places like Tallulah would become the busy haunts of Victorian travelers intent on having their own “sublime” experience with the falls. Needless to say, a collection of hotels prospered in the region in the years following the Civil War, and the gorge became one of the preeminent destinations throughout the South.³⁸

In 1994, the State of Georgia teamed with Georgia Power to open the Tallulah Gorge State Park. By aligning with the park system, Tallulah once again became a

³⁸See *Tallulah Falls* (1998) by Margaret Calhoon and Lynn Speno for a compelling pictorial account of Tallulah’s Victorian heyday and decline. The falls lost favor as a tourist destination after a dam was constructed in the early twentieth century. The power of Tallulah was harnessed to power the growing city of Atlanta.

mecca for walkers and sight seers. Yet the twentieth-first century manifestation of Tallulah is quite different from its obscure origins, and the “frowning crag” that greeted Ellet and the other Antebellum travelers has been tamed.

Located a mile from busy highway 23/441, which connects Atlanta to the Blue Ridge, Tallulah Gorge welcomes throngs of people throughout the year. When I pulled into the lot one Saturday in July, I could not locate a parking place and decided to surreptitiously claim a spot reserved for motor homes. Instead of the gorge itself, the fall’s visitor center, named after conservationist Jane Hurt Yard, is the center of activity at Tallulah. From here, tourists can plot their walk, interact with rangers, and wander the museum, which provides a detailed history of the falls.



Tallulah Falls.

Figure 4.1 Thomas Addison Richardson's idealized etching of Tallulah (1842).

The endangered persistent trillium (*trillium persistens*) thrives in the gorge's shady glens and because of this, and safety concerns, park regulations limit access to the ravine. Only 100 visitors daily are permitted to hike into the chasm. At the Jane Hurt Yard entrance a sign warns, "Hikers without permits will be fined." Once on the trail, the signage continues every 100 yards: "NOTICE TO VISITORS! Anyone entering or

leaving Tallulah Gorge Stated Park by unauthorized route or who accesses the gorge floor without permit will be charged under penalty of Ga. Law (OCGA 12-3-10).” As a result, the finest, and for most the only, view of the bottom of Tallulah comes from a film played in the center’s theatre.

For those who are not able to tour the floor, the park offers a series of rim trails. The trails are paved with a corrugated-rubber tread, and as they wind along the canyon’s rim, more posts threaten:

STAY ON MARKED TRAIL
VIOLATIONS CAUSE SERIOUS INJURY, RISK,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE
VIOLATORS WILL BE PROSECUTED

The limited access to the gorge floor coupled with the demand to “stay on marked trail” alters the perspective of a walker at Tallulah. Pedestrians should no doubt take caution when treading near a deep gorge, and visitors should be informed about the protected trillium; however, the bold language of the signs made me feel as if I were walking through the King’s forest, and with any wayward step I would simultaneously fall to my death, destroy the last known persistent trillium, and be ticketed for my transgressions. Still, the vista of the gorge from the labeled vantage points impresses. A heavily wooded ravine stretches out below, and steep, undaunted cliffs drop off from

the rim “in rugged confusion” (70). The “sublime fear” that Ellet experienced along the precipice, nevertheless, morphs into a feeling of pleasantness. Families smile for pictures back-dropped by Oceania falls, and flip-flop footwear attests to the general casualness of the walk.

With all of the safely railings and padded trails framed in front of the dammed Tallulah River, the park values visitor security over interaction. Even with the threat of mortal harm, one could argue that early visitors actually experienced the gorge while we contemporary travelers merely *see* it.³⁹ One can take in the vistas, amble back to the visitor’s center, and be eating at a local café in less than an hour. This is not to say that walking at Tallulah is any more effete than other state parks or that there is no value in such a task. Yet when one reads Ellet and then travels in her footsteps, there is a jolt. The cultivating of America that was at the forefront of Ellet’s time has come to fruition, and the gorge that we experience today mirrors our greater society of litigation and easy pleasure. As Simon Schama notes, “Landscapes are culture before they are nature; constructs of the imagination onto wood and water and rock” (61). Strangely enough, walking at Tallulah requires a great deal of imagination, and current strolls along the rim edge offer a different milieu. Without much consideration, one can simply walk

³⁹The trails are named after Helen Dortch Longstreet. She was the second wife of Confederate Gen. James Longstreet. A lifelong conservationist, Longstreet lobbied the state to purchase Tallulah and transform it into a park in 1911. Longstreet’s dream became a reality in 1994.

straight, adhere to the signs and all will be well; if the legs move, then the eyes will witness. In Ellet's time, walking needed to be tempered by one's own judgment. Where should the foot be placed to avoid falling? What if the rocks do not hold? We may have traded freedom for safety, but Ellet's "A Ramble" gives a glimpse into what that lost world of walking looked like to intrepid mid-century pedestrians.

Rambles about the Country was not Ellet's sole travelogue. In 1853, she published *Summer Rambles in the West* which chronicled a journey through Michigan and Minnesota territory. Though the work represents a more ambitious and cohesive book, her mode of travel was not singularly pedestrian. In this regard, *Summer Rambles* is more analogous to other mid-century travel texts. She writes about the customs and mannerisms of pioneer families and Indian populations as well as prairie flora and fauna.⁴⁰ Even though *Summer Rambles* concerns travel in general rather than specific walks, the town of Eden Prairie, Minnesota, dedicated a nature trail in Ellet's honor in 2007. Inspired by descriptions of the region, the trail-makers created a two-mile loop walk. The interpretive trail includes signage of ecologically crucial plant life and also passages from *Summer Rambles*, which contextualize the path for visitors.

Ellet was a prolific writer and traveler who earned fame in American letters with her work *Women of the American Revolution*. Ellet, however, should also be valued and

⁴⁰The Elizabeth Fries Ellet Interpretive Trail website claims that Eden Prairie derives its name from descriptions found in *Summer Rambles the West*.

remembered for her contributions to landscape sketches and pedestrian literature. She walked through and praised places that were certainly off of the literary maps, and her persona spoke as a sure-footed female guide through some of the wildest of terrains.

5 BRADFORD TORREY: WALKING THE EASTERN WAY

Elizabeth Fries Ellet's two works of walking and travel, *Rambles about the Country* and *Summer Rambles in the West*, solidify her inclusion into a loose society of literary pedestrians. Ellet's output of walking literature is comparatively small, however, when placed aside one of the nineteenth century's finest ramblers – Bradford Torrey (1849-1912). Best remembered for his introduction to the “deluxe” 1890 edition of *Walden* and for editing Thoreau's first published journals, Torrey's own writing lost readership in the early twentieth century.⁴¹ His fall into obscurity corresponded with the waning fashion of genteel nature-essays, perhaps best typified by John Burroughs. However, for a student of the American walking tradition, Torrey's works provide prime models of the ramble genre that had evolved from John D. Godman's first excursions. By the closing of the nineteenth century, the genre was in full blossom, and a sampling of titles from Torrey's canon is enough to peak any peripatetically inclined reader: *A Rambler's Lease* (1889); *The Foot-Path Way* (1892); *Spring Notes from Tennessee* (1896); *Footing it in Franconia* (1901); and *Field-Days in California* (1913).⁴²

⁴¹ See Kevin O'Donnell's fine and recent biographical sketch of Torrey's life and works in *Early American Nature Writers*. Pgs 365-370.

⁴² Unfortunately, no scholarly editions of Torrey's work are in print. Readers must rely upon micro-film, Google Books, and facsimile editions.

Born in 1843, Bradford Torrey spent his early years south of Boston in Weymouth, Massachusetts, and though he published and traveled widely, his private life still remains largely unknown. The first and most thorough account of Torrey draws from his obituary written by friend and colleague Francis Allen. Published in an ornithological journal, *The Auk*, soon after Torrey's death in October 1912, Allen's sketch discusses Torrey's early interest in pedestrian travel, noting that as a youth he "was fond of walking in the woods and the fields" (158). After his education in the village schools, Torrey worked for a time in a shoe factory, and as a teacher, before beginning a sixteen year tenure in Boston at the office of Treasurer of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (Allen).

Torrey began his literary career with the publication of "With the Birds on Boston Common," printed in the February 1883 edition of *Atlantic Monthly*. Friends encouraged Torrey to continue writing, and he soon became a consistent contributor to various other journals, writing what Allen describes as "discursive essays, on birds, flowers, and the world out of doors" (158). Torrey's reputation and catalog grew to the point that he began to attract interest from other naturalists such as John Burroughs and Celia Thaxter. In fact, throughout the 1890's Torrey corresponded with Thaxter, concerning bird-life in Maine's Isle of Shoals. Thaxter invited Torrey to come and walk

the island's terrain and observe birds with her; it was an invitation that Torrey, for unknown reasons, declined.⁴³

Although Torrey lived most of his life around Boston publishing in what critic Kingsbury Badger describes as “the Indian Summer” of New England nature writing, he did not follow the Thoreauvian model of exclusive regional travel (235). Instead, Torrey took several extended trips to the American South and published his observations of the post-Civil War landscapes of Florida, Tennessee, and North Carolina. After editing the first edition of Thoreau's journals in 1906, Torrey relocated to California. He lived out the remainder of his days living in a hotel south of Santa Barbara, where he continued to practice ornithology and take his daily walks. His final study, *Field-Days in California*, recounts tramps through the canyon-lands and along the western beaches.⁴⁴

Torrey's contribution to walking literature includes his first book-length reflection *A Rambler's Lease* (1889) and an effort at vacation writing, *Spring Notes from Tennessee* (1896). *Lease* charts Torrey's meditative walks over other people's property, while *Tennessee* finds Torrey visiting the Civil War battlefields of Chattanooga and Chickamauga.

⁴³For Thaxter's correspondence see *By This Wing: Letters by Celia Thaxter to Bradford Torrey about Birds at the Isles of Shoals, 1888-1894* by Donna Marion Titus (1999). Torrey's responses to Thaxter are lost.

⁴⁴ See O'Donnell's “Bradford Torrey” in *Early American Nature Writers*. Pgs 369.

5.1 Torrey's Travels: Early Walks and Tennessee

Many of the essays that comprise *A Rambler's Lease* were originally published in *Atlantic Monthly*. *Lease* provided the stylistic template for Torrey's future New England settings and publications, and by the time of the text's printing in 1889, walking literature had a well-established readership. The popularity of the ramble genre in the late nineteenth century, especially in the northeast, correlated with Thoreau's widening reputation as well as prevailing Victorian attitudes that genteel study of nature, especially birds, was a morally enriching activity for both men and women.⁴⁵

Undoubtedly, though, much of the late century's walking literature suffers from an abundance of sentimentality and a preponderance for anthropomorphizing the natural world. John Burroughs, the leading voice for nature writing in this period, addressed this falsifying of natural history in his 1903 essay, "Real and Sham Natural History." In Burroughs' estimation, so-called Nature Faker texts relied on an overtly didactic "sham nature" which featured odd, hyperbolic events like hawks taking their fledglings to school or foxes riding on the backs of sheep to escape hunters.⁴⁶ Burroughs saw in Torrey's work, however, the study of an authentic naturalist, so by the turn of the

⁴⁵Ralph H. Lutts' chapter "The Rise of Nature Lovers" in his text *Nature Fakers: Wildlife, Science, and Sentiment* gives an informed discussion on the popularity of nature writers in late nineteenth century America. Pgs 1-27.

⁴⁶Ibid.

century Burroughs confided that “Torrey is the only nature writer at present whose works I can read” (qtd. in Badger 234).

Certainly, Torrey’s work is reflective of other serious late century naturalists such as Wilson Flagg and even Burroughs himself.⁴⁷ Like his contemporaries, Torrey’s writings possessed mostly non-confrontational environmental stances concerning land stewardship, and his walks were informed by Thoreau’s vision and catalog. However, where Torrey lacks in environmental potency and stylistic deviation, he compensates with his mastery for ornithology, subtle humor, and gentle dissident attitudes toward American private property in regards to pedestrian right of ways.

The preface of *A Ramblers’ Lease* speaks to one of the main, though subversive, themes threading throughout his work – trespassing. Torrey is no respecter of property boundaries, and the text’s “Prefatory Note” acts as both apology and justification for Torrey’s walking philosophy:

The writer of this book has found so much pleasure in other men’s woods and fields that he has come to look upon himself as in some sort the owner of them. Their lawful possessors will not begrudge him this feeling, he believes, nor

⁴⁷ Wilson Flagg (1805-1884) was a contemporary of both Thoreau and Torrey. During the mid to late nineteenth century, his texts – most notably *The Woods and By-Ways of New England* (1872) – helped to establish him as one of the most published and respected naturalists in the county. His works, unfortunately, fell into obscurity during the twentieth century, and today his name remains largely unknown.

take amiss if he assumes, even in this public way, to hold a rambler's lease of their property [...] *His private opinion is that the world belongs to those who enjoy it*; and taking this view of the matter, he cannot help thinking that some of his more prosperous neighbors would do well, in a legal phrase, to perfect their titles. (my italics 1)

The preface's italicized sentence challenges one of the most cherished tenants of our American experiment, private property. In addition, the very title of Torrey's text, *A Rambler's Lease*, speaks to pedestrian rights of way.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary the word "lease" holds varied definitions. The word's first usage actually means "pasture, meadow-land, common." (OED). In this usage, *Lease* evokes a walker's prerogative; in other words, all land is "common" and open to walkers and lovers of the natural world. In addition to the more typically understood definition of lease as "a contract between two parties, by which one conveys lands [...] usually in consideration of rent or periodical compensation," a more archaic meaning of the word denotes "untrue, false, lying" (OED). This final definition is suggestive in that it gives the lie, so to speak, to those who believe that their land deeds can impede pedestrian travel. Indeed, *A Rambler's Lease* addresses this restrictive aspect of rambling: how can land owners impede access to their land? The text's title and preface also speak to a special reciprocity between walker and land

owner. If a lease is understood as a “contract between two parties,” what does the deeded owner gain from the walker’s tramp? Torrey concludes his preface by stating that “his [...] neighbors would do well, in a legal phrase, to perfect their titles” and “he would gladly be of service to them” (2). The underlying text here suggests that the walker serves as a kind of model proprietor, one whose dedication to nature could inspire the legal owner to more properly and poetically envision his land beyond mere monetary possession. In Torrey’s estimation, the walker, if he or she is perceptive and moral, holds a spiritual right to the land because it is the pedestrian who comes to understand the place, intimately, beyond materialist claims. The deeded owner provides the land; the walker compensates by offering inspiration.

Torrey confesses that he had always been a trespasser, and some of his best days were spent enjoying people’s lands while they were away “improving” their wealth and property. When writing of an old apple orchard that he visited in his youth, Torrey confides

Probably it will be no surprise to the owner of the place if I tell him that before I was twelve years old I knew the taste of all his apples. In fact, the orchard seemed so sequestered, so remote from any house, --especially from its proprietors, -- that it hardly seemed a sin to rob it. (17)

Torrey goes on to admit that he only took “windfall” apples and “that it must be a severe moralist who calls that stealing” (17). Nevertheless, he is happy that the owners of the land never discovered him on their property.

Torrey’s essay displays his typical nonchalance toward property infringement; however, he does at least reflect on land owners in *Lease*. Because even though many other earlier Euro-America travel and walking literatures could be considered narratives of trespass insofar as the authors often crossed boundaries largely claimed by indigenous tribes, few of the works overtly address the notion of violating territory. For example, the explorer John Smith was more apt to concern his audience with the teeming Chesapeake Bay fisheries or descriptions of immense plains that could support agriculture, than the cultural and territorial claims of the Powhatans.⁴⁸ Nonetheless there has often been an undercurrent of trepidation, if not outright fear, that walking beyond “the garden walls” is a dubious venture. In John Lawson’s account of his 500-mile trek through the North Carolina backcountry, *A New Voyage to Carolina* (1709), he addresses this concern when one of his parties goes missing during the exploration:

Yesterday, one of our Company, *not walking so fast as the rest*, was left behind. He being out of Sight before we miss'd him, and not coming up to us, tho' we staid a

⁴⁸See *The Complete Works of Captain John Smith, 1580-1631*. Ed. Phillip L. Barbour. 1986.

considerable time on the Road for him, we stuck up sticks in the Ground, and left other Tokens to direct him which way we were gone: But he came not to us that Night, which gave us Occasion to fear some of the Heathens had kill'd him, for his Cloaths, or the savage beasts had devour'd him in the Wilderness, he having nothing about him to strike Fire withal. (my italics 33)

Lawson's "fast walking" implies more than mere practical movement across terrain. The passage suggests that Lawson understood the hazard of crossing into native held lands and that anyone who cannot keep up with the fleet pace of the "company" risks corporal harm. Thankfully, Lawson's co-mate arrives within the day, "having a Waxsaw Indian for guide" (33). Lawson himself would pay for his own trespasses on Indian Territory when in 1811 he was captured and killed by warring Tuscaroras.

Even after the nation's founding, complete with its revolutionary ideas regarding personal property rights and privilege, the literature of foot-travel again largely side-stepped the issue of walking on and through private property. In contrast to their American cousins, late eighteenth century British writers were beginning to address the rights of walkers as romantic ramblers sought to reclaim the ancient foot-paths and rights of common ground that had been hoarded by the aristocracy throughout the millennium.⁴⁹ William Wordsworth, who coined the term "pedestrian,"

⁴⁹See Rebecca Solnit's *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*. Pgs 1404-117.

meditates on a walker's freedom in "Descriptive Sketches: Taken during a Pedestrian Tour of the Alps" (1788). In it the speaker praises the absolute independence that walking provides while simultaneously lamenting the current restrictions on foot travel:

Once, Man entirely free, alone and wild,

Was blest as free--for he was Nature's child.

He, all superior but his God disdained,

Walked none restraining, and by none restrained

Confessed no law but what his reason taught,

Did all he wished, and wished but what he ought. (my italics, lines 433-438)

Wordsworth's words are certainly redolent with Torrey, but perhaps the most direct antecedent to *Lease's* attitudes toward walkers' rights of passage can be traced to Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay, *Nature* (1836):

The charming landscape which I saw this morning is indubitably made up of some twenty or thirty farms. Miller owns this field, Locke that, and Manning the woodland beyond. But none of them owns the landscape. This is the best part of these men's farms, yet to this their warranty-deeds give no title (5).

Likewise, Torrey feels that the “best part” of the land lies not in the legal ownership of it, but rather in active engagement with it: “Not many of these latter [owners], I am confident, get a better annual income from the property than I do; and even in law, we are told, possession counts for nine points out of ten” (4).

Torrey does not come to this position on ownership as an unlanded man. In fact, Torrey does own a small parcel “happily remote from roads.” His chief concern is that his “fraction of an acre” would someday be disturbed by speculators who are intent on developing it, but he remains content in the thought that his land sits out of the way. Also, Torrey feels that the parcel is so small that no one will ever tempt him to sell out; hence, Torrey considers himself the protector of his lot and surrounding environs, acting as the de facto “Green Man” of Weymouth, Massachusetts: “I feel my own existence to be bound up with that of my pine-trees; or, to speak more exactly, that their existence is bound with mine” (3).

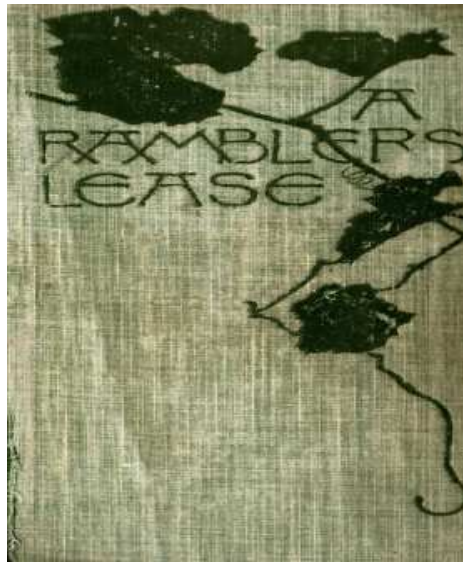


Figure 5.1 The Front-Piece of *A Rambler's Lease* (1889)

Just as thoughtful readers of his work notice, Torrey recognizes the transcendental influence on his thoughts. In *Lease's* opening essay, cleverly titled, "My Real Estate," he subtly acknowledges this debt to his literary predecessors when he writes, "In this respect my real estate is not unlike my intellectual possessions; concerning which I often find it impossible to determine what is actually mine and what another's" (4). From this point of view, the landscapes that Torrey travels through are not solely physical places, but they are also literary spaces. His work acts as a way of keeping open the trails and poetical sensibilities that were first blazed by Emerson and Thoreau. In *Walden's* "Conclusion," Thoreau foreshadows Torrey's New England walks with his typical iconoclastic regard: "I had not lived there a week before my feet wore a path from my door to the pond-side [...] It is true, I fear that others may have fallen into

it and kept it open" (426). Torrey, one of the faithful practitioners of Thoreau's ethos, counters with his own sly rebuttal:

My own genius for adventure is less highly developed; and to be frank, I have never learned to look upon affection and whim as synonymous with originality. In my eyes, it is nothing against a hill that other men have climbed it before me; and if their feet have worn a trail, so much the better." (14-15)

In addition to aligning with the Transcendentalists, *Lease* also includes Torrey's own version of the pure "walking essay" entitled "Esoteric Peripateticism." The British author William Hazlitt typified this style of prose in "On Going a Journey," (1821) and Rebecca Solnit attributes Hazlitt with the "foundation of the genre" (120). Solnit tongue in cheek claims that Hazlitt's work creates parameters for future pedestrian texts which illustrate that the "walk and essay are meant to be pleasant, even charming, and so no one ever gets lost and lives on grubs and rainwater in a trackless forest, has sex in a graveyard with a stranger, stumbles into battle, or see visions of another world" (120). In short, the English "walk essay" showcases a pleasure romp filled with delightful sights and pleasant, literary conversations with the audience, all within the confines and safety of a day's travel.

The differences between the “walking essay” and the “ramble essay” are mostly academic. On one hand, the ramble genre chiefly concerns descriptions of landscapes and reflective responses, either poetic or scientific or both, to the terrain over which the pedestrian travels. On the other hand, the “walking essay” primarily focuses on the physical act of walking and how one’s ambulatory mode improves health and vigor. These distinctions, though slight, tend to equip the “walking essay” with a didacticism lacking in the ramble. And “On Going a Journey” constructs this template. Hazlitt’s essay instructs on what he perceives as proper walking methods, “I like to have it all my own way; and this is impossible unless you are alone,” (228). It provides the corollary between walking and thinking that would persist well into twentieth-century pedestrian focused literature.⁵⁰

For all of their influence, the English “walking essays” negate, however, one crucial element found in the American form – the spiritual aspects of walking. In “Esoteric Peripateticism,” Torrey follows Hazlitt’s call for solitary excursions and landscape appreciation, but again, it is Thoreau, not the English, who acts as antecedent. Torrey boasts, “Walking, then, as adepts use the word, is not so much a

⁵⁰Robert Louis Stevenson’s “Walking Tours” (1876), Leslie Stephen’s “In Praise of Walking” (1902) and Christopher Morley’s “The Art of Walking” (1917) are all much anthologized British heirs to Hazlitt’s work.

physical as a spiritual exercise" (58). Earlier in the essay, Torrey had allied once more with Transcendentalist principles:

The disciples of this philosophy, the noble fraternity of saunter, among whom I enroll myself, are not greatly concerned with any kind of merely physical activity. They believe that everything has both a higher and lower use; and that the order of evolution the lower precedes the higher (57).

Certainly, the previous passage echoes Thoreau's own words in "Walking" when he wrote of the "*Sainte-Terrer, a Saunterer, a Holy Lander*" (93). Consider again Thoreau's attitude toward pedestrianism in "Walking": "But the walking of which I speak has nothing in it akin to taking exercise, as it is called, as the sick take medicine at stated hours [...] but is itself the enterprise and adventure of the day" (97). Torrey takes this further and claims that spiritual walkers are even closer to divine truth than most: "But of all who practiced the art, only here and there a single individual has divined its loftier use and significance. The rest are still in the materialistic stage – pedestrians simply." (57). For Torrey, walkers participate in an occult club, one that invariably involves an exclusive point of view and is not easily explained with those who do not practice its "art.": "We who are in the secret would gladly publish it if we could; but by its very nature the doctrine is esoteric" (58). In this regard, Torrey's words prefigure

those of the celebrated jazz artist Louis Armstrong who once quipped, "If you have to ask what jazz is, you'll never know."

Torrey's pseudo-mystical attitudes toward walking include unconcealed praise of the local and what he views as the all too often overlooked landscapes of "unfrequented road," "wooded slope," and "mossy glen" (62). It is one thing to view the sublime spectacles of America and "ah" at their wonders, but it is another, more refined aesthetic sensibility which finds "treasure" in one's own community:

What I take to be one of the principle advantages of the saunter's condition [is that] his treasures are never far to seek. His delight is in Nature herself, rather than in any of her more unusual manifestations. He is not of that large and increasingly fashionable class who fancy themselves lovers of Nature, while in fact they are merely admirers, more or less sincere, of fine scenery. (62)

Here Torrey gently chides those who travel great distances only to experience the so-called tricks of nature. The true saunterer is a seeker of wisdom, even enlightenment, not a man or woman of "fashion." Instead he or she knows the secret, or esoteric truth that the "treasures are never far to seek." Heaven, for Torrey, remains under his feet and always near at hand; one needs only to step outside the house: "These are enough for his pleasure. Out of his doorway he steps at will into the Elysian fields." (62).

Bradford Torrey's foray into book length collections with *A Rambler's Lease* introduced an author who carried on the traditions of Transcendental thought into the new the century. Torrey may well be criticized for his lack of originality; however, none can doubt his earnest regard for both the natural world and walking. In addition, critics should remain cognizant that many readers were undoubtedly led retrograde to Thoreau's writings by Torrey's enthusiastic endorsement.

Lease's ramble pieces, which highlight the birds of New England and the pastoral countryside around Weymouth, Massachusetts, along with his own attempt at the "walking essay," conform to the expected themes of genteel nature writing: the virtues of flora, fauna, and bodily movement. To build on this well-established repertoire, Torrey would take his skills southward to Tennessee, where five years after publishing *Lease*, he would confront a landscape with a much more dubious past.

In the spring of 1894, Torrey traveled to Chattanooga, Tennessee. While there he visited the newly dedicated battlefield sites of Chickamauga, Lookout Mountain, Orchard Knob, and Missionary Ridge. Torrey's work *Spring Notes from Tennessee* reflects on the avian variety of the South as it describes the still-healing-land and attempts to capture the reconciliatory spirit of the 1890's.

The National Park at Chickamauga and Chattanooga had not been officially opened when Torrey visited, and though the Civil War had been over for thirty years,

much of the landscape that Torrey described still bore the marks of conflict. Torrey does not suggest any agenda behind *Spring Notes*, yet the text visibly captures the desire for healing found in late nineteenth century America. Just as the founding of parklands turned battlegrounds from places of strife to landscapes of promise, Torrey's work, too, is an act of ceasefire. As he walks the fields and ridges, he is just as apt to hear the songs of birds as he is to find bullets, and when he describes the people of the South he observes their genuine humanity and builds connections with his New England, "Yankee" readership. *Spring Notes* provides a unique glimpse into American attitudes toward the Civil War, not too long after the conflict ended, and the peaceful voice of Torrey, a walker and bird-watcher, provides a fitting juxtaposition against the marshaled shout of cavalry and canons.

Ramble literature often presents a digressive, meandering style, but *Spring Notes from Tennessee* expresses unification. It is divided into eight prose chapters and a bird taxonomy epilogue. As the titles of the initial four walks suggest, the first half of the text explores primary battle locations: "An Idler on Missionary Ridge," "Lookout Mountain," "Chickamauga," and "Orchard Knob and the National Cemetery." After his stroll through the national cemetery, however, Torrey no longer walks the landscapes of past horrors, and he turns his attention to Chattanooga's more naturalistic attractions. The final five chapters accentuate this movement away from the conflict toward more

typical ramble topics and titles: "An Afternoon by the River," "A Morning in the North Woods," "Week on Walden's Ridge," and "Some Tennessee Bird Notes." The conclusion of *Spring Notes* provides a catalog of the bird species that Torrey encountered during his holiday. He furnishes both the common and Latinate names in addition to the locales where they were witnessed. Just as the country was building monuments to its "fallen heroes," Torrey's list serves as a register to the regenerative and living world beyond human warfare.

Spring Notes' opening chapter "An Idler on Missionary Ridge" begins with Torrey's rail arrival in Chattanooga on April 26, 1894 "in the midst of a rattling thunder-shower"(1). The next morning he sets off in earnest to investigate the scenery along Missionary Ridge, and even though the narrative's voice is one of solitary observation, the popularity of battlefield visitation compels him to share "an electric car for Missionary Ridge" with "four Louisiana veterans fresh from their annual reunion at Birmingham" (1). Torrey is quick to make acquaintance with the former Confederates. These veterans offer to "show [him] the whole battlefield and tell about the fight" (2). Just as the new group of friends, in a unifying act, "walked up the slope to the foot of the observatory," Torrey becomes distracted by a bird's song:

But just then my ear caught somewhere beyond us the song of a

Bachman's finch, -- a song I had heard a year before in the pine woods

of Florida, and, in my ignorance, was unprepared for here [...] It led me a little chase, and when I had seen it I must look also at a summer tanager, a chat, and so on, one thing leading to another; and by the time I returned to the observatory the veterans had come down and were under some apple trees. (2-3)

The previous passage displays Torrey's typical method of interacting with people throughout *Spring Notes*. He often begins a scene as part of a larger company of travelers, but suddenly he becomes distracted and is pulled away by the sound or sight of a bird or an innate desire to be alone. For example, on May 1st Torrey again travels up to Missionary Ridge "but the car was full of laughing, smartly dressed colored people; they were bound for the same place [...]; and being in a quiet mood, I took the hint and dropped out by the way" (92). This movement with and then away from others plays an important role in nature and walking literature. As Randall Roodra explains in *Dramas of Solitude*, "In the action of walking [...] the primary movement or quest is the movement outward from the human to the nonhuman – the retreat to solitude in nature – then back again in the retelling of text" (18). Torrey uses this pattern of starting out as one of a crowd and then dropping by the way-side to underpin his distinctive identity as a New England visitor and natural observer. Further, *Spring Notes* typically begins chapters by presenting Torrey riding to the edge of town in an "electric car" or coach

only to leave the confines of public transport and walk alone into the woods to listen for birds.

Torrey proves to have one of the keenest ears in ornithology; recall that Torrey claims to identify the sound of the first day's Bachman's finch [sparrow], a bird that does not typically inhabit New England and which was heard "a year before in the pine woods of Florida" (3). He confesses that his uncanny ability to recognize and then pursue a bird's call must make him an "odd stick" to the veteran's intent on recounting war-tales, yet he takes his position as an outsider in stride:

I suppose that the noblest patriot in the world, if he chanced to be also an ornithologist, would notice a bird even amid the smoke of battle; and why should not I do as much on a field which the battle smoke had vanished thirty years before? (4)

Torrey spent his first days around Chattanooga acclimating to the southern climate. The weather plays a prominent role in his walks here, and Torrey is not adverse to describing and even complaining about the "spring weather of Tennessee":

Even now, in the deep frigidity of a Massachusetts winter, I cannot think of Missionary Ridge without seeing again those long stretches of burning sunshine. Wherein the least spot of shade was like a palm in the desert [...] I would hoist my umbrella and push forward, cringing

at every step as if I were crossing a field of fire [...] The excessive heat, combined with the trying dog-day humidity, sadly circumscribed all of my Tennessee rambles. (10)

Torrey's grumblings about the southern environment – "If the Fates could have sent me on a cool day!" – connote *Spring Notes* markedly realistic style (17). Early romantic travelers typified by pedestrians like Estwick Evans, who charged through the Great Black Swamp shoeless yet smiling at the forest's "sublime presence," tended to exclude the more temporal aspects of walking. Because Torrey treads through places remembered for great suffering, it seems obligatory that he describe the discomforts of walking. Missionary Ridge contrasts against Torrey's former New England stomping grounds which had long since erased the vestiges of battle. Here, in the heat, Torrey recalls the suffering of the near-past and makes allowances for a curative future between the northern and southern states.

The heat was not Torrey's only obstacle as he toured around Chattanooga. He also gives a frank assessment of the road conditions and the foot problems encountered by southern pedestrians:

One thing I soon perceived: the rain had left the roads in a condition of unspeakable adhesiveness. The red clay balled up my heels as if it had been moist snow, till I pitched forward as I walked. I fancied

that I understood pretty well the sensations of a young lady in high-heeled shoes. One moment, too, my feet were weighted with lead; then the next the mass fell off in a sudden big lump, and my next few steps were on air. A graceful, steady, self-possessed gait was out of the question [...] However, I was not disposed to complain. we read much about the tribulations of Northern soldiers on the march in Virginia, -- of entire armies mud-bound and helpless. Henceforth I shall have some better idea of what such statements mean. (114)

Torrey paints a comic yet enduring picture of his walks. The image of a mud-filled ornithologist rambling along the former battlefield holds a reader's interest in Torrey as literary persona; his self-deprecatory characterization keeps his work from becoming too stilted and overly precious, and once he develops this rapport with his readers, he captures their further attention with first rate natural descriptions. Even the heat and mud of the Tennessee spring will not keep Torrey from his primary quarry – birds. For his suffering and patience, the naturalist is always repaid. He locates the shaded umbrage, and the birds' songs mute out and soften Chattanooga's history:

All this woodland music is set off by spaces of silence, sweeter almost than the music itself. Here is peace unbroken; here is delicious coolness, while the sun blazes upon the dusty road above me. How amiable a

power is contrast – on its softer side! I think of the eager, bloody, sweaty, raging men, who once stormed up these slopes, killing, and being killed.

The birds know nothing of all that. It might have been thousands of years ago. The very trees have forgotten it. (21-22)

Torrey's insistence that "it might have been a thousand years ago," speaks to the restorative power of nature, and it addresses one of the text's major themes – reconciliation. How was the country to move beyond the strife? *Spring Notes* suggests we look to walking and to the natural world for answers. If the flora and fauna have transcended the memory of the conflict, cannot citizens do the same?

One hundred and thirty years after Torrey, another walker and writer, Jerry Ellis, also set out searching for a way to recover from the Civil War's legacy. In *Marching through Georgia: My Walk along Sherman's Route* (1995), Ellis travels the course of Sherman's famed "March to the Sea." He muses, "It seemed to me that if I could walk the path of the South's deepest wound, I could walk through the past and into the future. Then, I could move on" (7-8). *Spring Notes*, in a sense, shares the same charter with *Marching through Georgia* – moving on. As Torrey walks through the dust and heat of Missionary Ridge, he purges the ingrained violence of the battlefield field by giving it back to the natural world. Pragmatically, the land, of course, is not his to "give back;" however, in an aesthetic sense, the grounds can be released from the memory of the

fight. Instead of seeking out enemies, he seeks and finds the wrens and warblers that have reconstituted this lost green world.

In the chapters following "Missionary Ridge," Torrey ascends the heights of Lookout Mountain and experiences "a day worth remembering" among the boulders and crags of its highlands; he also undertakes an "all-day excursion" to "field of Chickamauga" where the heat continues to plague his visit (48, 57). Both Lookout Mountain and Chickamauga display ample bird species, but it is the Chickamauga battlefield which impresses Torrey's imagination more fully. Torrey explores the grounds in his usual contemplative fashion, and unlike those that he encounters along the way, riding in carriages and on horseback, he sticks to pedestrian transport:

Unhappily, and I then thought, the sun implacable, with the mercury in the nineties, though it was only the 3rd of May; and as I was on foot, and the national reservation covers nine or ten square miles, I saw hardly more than a corner of the field. This would have been a more serious disappointment had my errand been of topographical or historical nature. As the case was, being only a sentimental pilgrim, I ought perhaps to have welcomed the burning heat [...]. When a man goes in search of a mood, he must go neither too fast nor too far. (57-58)

Torrey arrived at the battlefield during a transitory period situated between desolation and recovery. He was a self-described “sentimental pilgrim” who witnessed the geography just as it was self-consciously being constructed into a place of national sacredness. Through a public effort, the nightmare of battle was giving way to a pastoral permanence.

5.2 Chickamauga: A Land of Strife and Atonement

Torrey’s full reasons for touring the Chickamauga and Chattanooga battlefields are obscure, yet the park’s history as well as the socio-political climate of the late nineteenth century may offer context to his literary interest in the area. The lower Tennessee Valley had long been disputed land. During the Revolutionary War, Cherokee chief Dragging Canoe and his warriors posed an existential threat to American settlers beyond the Appalachian range. Dragging Canoe initiated many raids across the Tennessee Valley from his camp below Lookout Mountain, and even after his death in 1776, the valley was considered ominous ground – the name Chickamauga derives from a Cherokee word meaning “river of death.”⁵¹

This shadow of violence loomed over southern Tennessee when in the summer 1863 Union General J. Rosecrans’ Army of the Cumberland marched south from

⁵¹John Ehle’s *Trail of Tears: The Rise and Fall of the Cherokee Nation* provides a comprehensive history of the Cherokee’s settlement of southeastern Tennessee and their conflicts with American expansion.

Nashville in an effort to capture the important supply town of Chattanooga then held by the Confederate Army of Tennessee, under the leadership of General Braxton Bragg. In late August, Bragg's army withdrew from the city to north Georgia under an impending threat from Rosecrans's force. By early September, however, Bragg had drafted plans to retake Chattanooga, and he began to reposition his force back to the Tennessee line. Meanwhile, Rosecrans moved his army southward. Initial skirmishes along Chickamauga Creek would escalate into one of the deadliest battles of the Civil War; the two-day clash on September 19th and 20th claimed over 34,000 Northern and Southern casualties (Cozzens 534). Even though the Confederates officially won the battle by pushing Rosecrans's troops back north to Chattanooga, it was a pyrrhic victory and one that Bragg could not capitalize upon. Instead of pursuing the fleeing Union army, he gave them time to regroup back in Chattanooga. Bragg's decision not to go after the Union troops disheartened his lieutenant commanders. Years later, one of Bragg's subordinates, Lt. General Daniel Hill, reflected on what he viewed as Bragg's failure of leadership and the effect that it had upon the confederate morale:

It seems to me that the élan of the Southern Soldier was never seen after Chickamauga – that brilliant dash which had distinguished him was gone... he fought stoutly to the last, but, after Chickamauga, with the

sullenness of old despair and without the enthusiasm of hope. (qtd. in Cozzen 536)

This lost opportunity to rout the Union army would prove costly to Bragg and his troops. In November of 1863, the Union, with fresh reinforcements now under the command of General Grant, was able to push the Southerners from their high-ground strongholds around Chattanooga on Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain. With Chattanooga now securely in Federal hands, the state of Georgia lay vulnerable to Union advance and open to ultimate defeat.

In the years before Torrey traveled to Chattanooga, the former battlefield had already seen a steady stream of visitors. 1888 would prove a fortuitous year for Chickamauga, as it set the foundation for all battlefield preservation in the coming decades. A former Union Brig. General and veteran of the battle, Henry Van Ness Boynton, traveled to Chickamauga and lamented that there were no official monuments to the fallen. In contrast, Gettysburg had received much attention by private associations that sought to preserve, through placards and monuments, the memory of Union units who fought and died on the field. No such attempts at preservation had been made in the South, and Boynton began in earnest safeguard the sites. Boynton was a newspaper correspondent for the *Cincinnati Commercial Gazette* stationed in

Washington D.C., and soon after his trip to Chickamauga he published a series of open letters which promoted battlefield preservation:

The survivors of the Army of the Cumberland should awake to great pride in this notable field of Chickamauga. Why should it not, as well as eastern fields, be marked by monuments, and its lines accurately persevered for history? Both sides might well unite in preserving the field where both, in a military sense won such renown. (qtd. in Kaser 83)

Boynton's letters were a success; in 1889 the Society of the Army of the Cumberland was founded.⁵² This society proved instrumental in purchasing battleground open spaces in Chickamauga as well as those located around Chattanooga. Buoyed by this early achievement, Boynton exclaimed that that "the work at Chickamauga was 'a new thing under the sun,'" and he made it his life's mission to protect America's Civil War heritage.⁵³ In 1890, the United States Congress became involved with the conservation project, and they approved legislation to establish the first National Military Park. Soon after, visitors arrived in droves as the federal government constructed monuments that honored both Northern and Southern military units (T. Smith 30). Accordingly, the

⁵²See Timothy Smith's *A Chickamauga Memorial: the Establishment of America's First Civil War National Military Park* (2009).

⁵³ Ibid.

Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park was born; the park was followed in quick succession by the founding of other battlefield parks: Shiloh (1890), Gettysburg (1894), and Vicksburg (1895). When Chickamauga battlefield commenced to the public on September 19th, 1895, it was “intended as conscience commemoration of the past. Dedication exercises were scheduled for the same dates on which the battle had been fought, and every attempt was made to induce participants in the battle to be present” (Kaser 111). Chickamauga now boasts over 8000 acres and models the largest battlefield in the National Military Park system. The park with its rolling hills, finely manicured fields, and well-maintained timber hides its history, and without the statues and memorial placards no one would suppose a violent past.

Indeed, Chickamauga comprises one of America’s most idealized landscapes. It is one that ironically resembles neither the pre-war, working farms nor immediate battlefield desolation. Instead, the Chickamauga that visitors confront in the twenty-first century occupies what Leo Marx calls “poetic, imaginative constructions which heighten meaning far beyond the limits of fact” (43). Though Marx refers to America’s pastoral literary tradition, the same impulse to “heighten meaning” applies to battleground restoration. A static beauty fills the valley. Once completed, the grounds would forever memorialize in trees and pasture the human sacrifice, and in many ways the land now seems like a grand museum curio.

In the years after white settlement and before the battle, Chickamauga valley was filled with pioneer families intent on farming the hard-scrabble land. The families, of course, tilled fields and filled the woods with free-range livestock which rutted the forest and kept it debris free. Farmers cleared timber for fuel and the widening of arable property. In short, the subsistence farms of Chickamauga were humble, family places and would have appeared to contemporary eyes, in a very real sense, as meager and worked over. Torrey observed how these private places, through a twist of fate, would become a national shrine:

A strange fate that had befallen these Georgia farms, owned once by Dyer, Snodgrass, Kelly, Brotherton, and the rest: the plainest and most ordinary of country houses, in which lived the plainest of country people, with no dream of fame, or much else, perhaps, beyond a day's work and a day's ration [...]. Now the farmers are gone, but their names remain; and as long as the national government endures, pilgrims *will come to walk* over the historic acres [...]. So Fame catches up a chance favorite, and consigns the rest to oblivion. (my italics 79)

The battle altered much: tops of trees were blow apart by cannon fragments, earthworks were dug, and the grounds were strewn with military debris. Thus, *Spring Notes* proffers an important sketch of Chickamauga during its transformative days, when

“fame” was “catch[ing] up a chance favorite,” before the consummation of Boynton’s bucolic dream that visitors now encounter.

The Chickamauga museum book store stocks its shelves with a wealth of volumes concerning the Chattanooga campaign as well as general Civil War history and biographies of notable leaders. Unfortunately, Bradford Torrey’s *Spring Notes* is absent. When I asked the clerk if he had ever carried Torrey’s work, he merely replied, “Sorry, never heard of him.” Soon after his visits to the South, however, Torrey’s *Spring Notes* received more promising reviews. *The Boston Congregationalist*, no doubt prompted by Torrey’s earlier success, wrote that “the mere announcement of a new book by Bradford Torrey brings delight to a host of nature lovers” (qtd. in *Atlantic Monthly*), and *The Brooklyn Reader* applauded *Spring Notes*:

The reader delights in a book with an out-door atmosphere, or who has any interest in bird life, will find Mr. Torrey’s latest volume most delightful [...] His narrative is so interesting and he describes so well what he sees that the reader cannot help enjoying it in the same manner. (qtd. in *Atlantic Monthly*)

Perhaps *Spring Notes* would also “bring delight” to contemporary readers if they were aware of its existence. Yet, at least for the time, Torrey’s work will remain a niche text, important to ramble and ornithological readers but relegated to specialty studies.

Put simply, Chickamauga battlefield possesses great beauty. When I stepped out of the museum parking lot into the midday sun, the first bird that sang out was a wood thrush (*turdus mustelinus*). Immediately it was answered by another, further up and out across a field toward Snodgrass Hill. I followed. Throughout my walk in Chickamauga, it was easy to envision Torrey rambling along with his umbrella and field-scope seeking out migrants and local birds, and delighting in the odd Baltimore oriole the he “was never gladder to see” (78). Harder still to rekindle and imagine were the storms of soldiers who clashed here. Perhaps this was due to the solid effort of the National Park Service to maintain the ground’s verdant exterior. Joggers and bike riders now glean along old Boynton road, and it brought to mind the road’s construction. Torrey tells of “a jaunt through the woods past the Kelly house” which “brought me to a superfine, spick-and span new road” (84). National Park mowers were now tending along this same avenue, and the same tone of labor and preservation that greeted Torrey still lingers among the out-buildings, monuments, and towers. This effort to preserve the memory remains constant. As Simon Schama observes in *Landscape in Memory*, “National identity [...] would lose much of its ferocious enchantment without the mystique of a particular landscape tradition: its topography mapped, elaborated, and enriched as a homeland” (15). The creation of a park preserve and Torrey’s pilgrimage to the spot imprints our obsessions with the past into a mythology of continuance. By

setting aside sacred places, the American imagination becomes an indigenous one; invariably, home becomes the homeland.

At the south end of Chickamauga, an imposing tower rises from a knoll. This stone turret acts as both functional observation deck to some of the most contended fields of the battle, and it also serves as a monument to Col. Joe Wilder's Indiana mounted infantry who protected the Union army's flank with their seven-shot Spencer carbines.⁵⁴ I arrived at the tower after walking through a fierce thunderstorm; the wood thrushes had quit singing, and I took shelter in the dark monument. After the storm passed, I walked across the parking lot to a forgotten corner of the field called "Bloody Pond." The pond was actually filled in by the Army Corps of Engineers in the middle of the twentieth century. However, the sunken ground, I am told, still holds water during the strongest of rains. I reviewed an old map to locate its exact spot. Chickamauga's Bloody Pond does not possess the same infamy as the Bloody Pond found at Shiloh, but during the battle it was a place of solace for the wounded and dying of both armies. I set down next to the low place, and it occurred to me that this backfilled pond acts as a metaphor for the entire battlefield – it is hidden in plain sight; it is a healed-over scar. Just as Torrey predicted, the struggles enacted at Chickamauga have given way to the healing power of time. Torrey concludes his walk by the pond, too. His final thoughts

⁵⁴John Bowers explains the importance of Wilde's actions in *Chickamauga and Chattanooga*. Pgs 63-65.

on the past conflict are quick to be superseded by the presently enacted song of bird:

“There was no better place on the field, perhaps in which to realize the horrors of battle, and I was glad to have a chickadee’s voice the last sound in my ears as I turned away” (88).

By Torrey’s own account, he was a sojourner in Tennessee from April 27 to May 18, 1894. During this time, he identified 93 species of birds and walked many miles through battle-sites and across the national cemetery. He even spent a week rambling along the aptly named Walden’s Ridge where he had heard “if I wanted a bit of wild country that was the place for me” (124). His final walk in Tennessee ended “in such a spot it would have been easy to grow sentimental; but there came a rumbling of thunder, the sky darkened, and with a final hasty look about me, I picked up my umbrella and started homeward” (182). True to the romantic tradition, Torrey concludes his forgotten, though intriguing Southland jaunt with a homeward journey. Torrey’s travels around his own country in Massachusetts, his extended visits to the American South and later to the West Coast, provide a crucial lens into the style of walking and travel literature that was available to pedestrian readers at the turn of the last century. One hundred years after Torrey lost his audience, now may be the time to recover his forgotten observations on what it means to walk and to observe our own communal and sacred places.

6 CONCLUSION

For all of their individual differences in style and subject matter, the walkers in this study share one unifying affection – love for America’s land. Evans, Godman, Ellet, and Torrey all desired to connect with what is simply regarded as nature, or the outside world, by physical engagement with its tangible forms. This compulsion to know the ground remains at the heart of much of America’s literature and also its mythic understanding of itself. During the nineteenth century, the American imagination was occupied with transforming this “new world” into something native, and walking the ground helped to give Euro-Americans indigenusness, a right to homeland. After all, the first migrants to this continent were walkers; they left the Asiatic world behind them and moved southward toward the canyons, mountains, and forests of North America. If the American Indians were to be replaced, what brand of people would inherit their land? How could we claim to be authentic sons and daughters of this continent without walking across the terrain and letting various environments burn into our collective memory? Consider, for example, the lines from Robert Frost’s “The Gift Outright”:

The Land was ours before we were the land’s [...]

Until we found out that it was ourselves

We were withholding from our land of living,

And forthwith found salvation in surrender. (1, 9-11)

The walkers in this project all found “salvation in surrender[ing],” and we have been rambling every since, exploring and seeking out on foot what it means to live here, to connect with this America and make it ours. It would be easy to conclude that the twenty-first century would spell a twilight for the genre of walking literature.

Literature of the ramble might seem too quaint, too, to use the pejorative, pedestrian, in this fast-paced, troublesome world. I am glad to report, however, that walking literature still maintains an enduring readership.

In the past thirty years, long distance trails, like the Appalachian Trail, have spawned a sub-genre within the walking field. Works like Bill Bryson’s *A Walk in the Woods* (1998) and *A Road More-or Less Traveled (Madcap Adventures Along the Appalachian Trail)* by Stephen Otis and Colin Roberts (2007) continue to be widely reviewed, and in the case of Bryson, even become best sellers.⁵⁵ Almost two hundred years after Evans’ praise of the solitary, Otis and Roberts recount how camaraderie among long distance walkers is just as crucial as solitude:

I’ve walked hundreds of miles to be here. A hundred days maybe. They are

⁵⁵ Earl Shaffer’s narrative *Walking with Spring*, recounts his 1948 hike on the Appalachian Trail (AT). Published by the Appalachian Trail Conference in 1982, it has become a seminal work among the hiking community. Shaffer’s work has spawned almost 100 publications which deal with AT experiences. Bryson and Otis and Stephen’s texts mine the post-modern truisms of irony and self-effacement, as they question their own “wilderness” skills and muse upon the paradoxes American culture.

single miles, days, moments, and they all lead here. To this one mile, day, moment. [...] Applejack walked toward evening. His steps left imprints on the earth, tracks for Futureman to follow.⁵⁶ (179)

Indeed, contemporary walking narratives often sublimate descriptions of the “charms of scenery” in favor of character and relationship studies along with anecdotal humor. For twenty-first century readers, interest in the shared burdens and joys of distance walking perhaps speaks to current readers’ vicarious desire to join hikers as they are reborn with new names and new legs in the still wild mountains of the east. In addition, a web search for “ramble” produces thousands of results, ranging from the personal, experiential form, like the ones mastered by Torrey, to an expanded genre which includes field guides and tourists accounts.

In short, walking literature lives on. And because walking, rambling, strolling, meandering, strutting, questing, hiking, and pedestrian travel plays an integral part of what it means to be human, the forecast for the genre remains promising. Each generation discovers it like a freshly found talent. People will always walk, and undoubtedly there will be those who wish to share their insights about our shared ground, step by step and word by word.

⁵⁶ People who hike the entire Appalachian Trail in under a year are referred to as “thru-hikers” and as such they often adopt trail names. Otis was known as “Applejack” while his companion Roberts donned the moniker of “Futureman.”

6.1 A Compendium of My Favorite Walks

I have walked through a range of American landscapes. From the entire Appalachian and Long Trails, to the streets of Manhattan and the deserts of California, I have given my feet to this country. In fact, my first order of business whenever I arrive in a new place is to go for a walk and stretch my experience. Even though I have explored various American places, I still consider my walking knowledge provincial. I have lived my entire life in the southeast, and the pedestrian experiences of my youth and adulthood have been most informed by the Appalachian Mountains and Piedmont. To echo Thoreau, I have traveled a good deal in the South, and what I have noticed from walking here is that the act of discovery remains concurrent; it is a verb spoken in the present tense, an unfolding. I have learned that the worlds of Evans and Godman, Ellet and Torrey can still be walked and by reading their words, we can be compelled to step out and see what they saw, feel what they felt.

The following catalog is a personal list of my favorite jaunts. Some of the locations constitute for wilderness, at least in by Eastern standards, and others are decidedly pastoral. The list progresses by alphabet, not preference.

- Big South Fork National Recreation Area: Honey Creek Trail. Length, 5.5 miles. Located in Tennessee's Cumberland Mountains, the Honey Creek Loop trail is a jewel of the Big South Fork National Recreation Area. The trail is a strenuous

loop that boasts several large rock houses and natural amphitheatres. It drops into steep ravines, where hikers must use caged ladders to descend, and then it follows a narrow route on the South River. Finally, Honey Creek also showcases several ancient eastern hemlock groves as well as fine views of category III and IV river rapids.

- Buffalo Mountain: High Ridge Trail. Length, 4.5 miles.

Located just two miles from Johnson City, Tennessee, Buffalo Mountain offers walkers rigorous climbs and also fine views of the city and the Unaka Mountains to the north. I most enjoy walking through this mixed hardwood forest during spring months just as the lady slippers are beginning to bloom.

- Congaree National Park: Oak Ridge Trail. Length, 7.5 miles.

The Congaree is one of the newest additions to America's National Park system; however, it is also one of the finest. The Congaree National Park is twenty miles south of Columbia, South Carolina, and it holds some of the last acreage of old growth flood plain in America. This extensive seasonal wetland has the highest tree canopy in the United States, not including the California redwood forest, and it is home to numerous champion trees, including the largest loblolly pine, cherry bark oak, American holly, sweet gum, and bald cypress found in the

country. The park is still relevantly unknown and crowds are kept to a minimum.

- Cubahatchi Educational Center: Towaliga River Trail. Length, 8 miles.

With its headwaters in Henry County Georgia, the Towaliga River is a vital tributary to one of Georgia's most historic rivers, the Ocmulgee. The Henry County Water Authority maintains the Towaliga River Trail for educational purposes and habitat for water fowl. The trail follows the river banks through a series of boardwalks and bridges as it passes through impressive beech groves and skirts pasture land. Although the route is well established, the trail sees little use and is therefore perfect for providing a solitary ramble.

- Henry County, Georgia. Luella and Trestle Road Loop. Length, 3.5 miles.

Much of Henry County's terrain is anathema to my walking preferences: strip malls and miles suburban sprawl abound. However, near my house there are series of gravel roads that loop around fields planted in clover and cotton. These low-traffic lanes offer some of the best walking in the county. This walk is best undertaken at night as light pollution is low on Luella and Trestle Roads, and the moon rises are unrestricted in all directions.

- Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest, Poplar Cove Loop. Length, 2 miles.

Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest is located within the boundaries of the greater Nantahala National Forest in western North Carolina. It draws its name from the poet Joyce Kilmer who wrote the memorable verse, "Trees." Although Kilmer was killed in World War One, his legacy lives on in this aptly named forest. A number of the giant tulip poplars are over 400 years old, and the entire mystique of the forest speaks to a time before the arrival of European settlement.

Unfortunately, Joyce Kilmer has suffered the loss of its old growth eastern hemlocks. Most are dead due to an infestation of wholly algid beetles. This exotic pest has ravaged unchecked for the past fifteen years and threatens to decimate the hemlocks much like the blight that crippled the American chestnut trees.

- Roan Mountain: Appalachian Trail to Grassy Ridge Trail. Length 7 miles, round trip.

In northeast Tennessee, the Roan high knob and peaks of Round Bald, Jane Bald, Yellow Mountain, and Grassy Ridge offer some of the most stunning vistas in the Appalachian chain. The walk along the grass and rock covered ridge line provides unimpeded views west into the Tennessee Valley, north to Virginia's Mt. Rodgers, and south toward North Carolina's Black Mountains and Mt. Mitchell, the highest point east of the Mississippi River. In addition, Roan

Mountain maintains a healthy black bear population and offers a vital corridor for migratory birds.

Finally, reading and writing about walking provides, but there will never be a substitute for the language of legs. Now stand up and ...

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